

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1987.—VOL. LXXV.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 16, 1900.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT IT IS PAST TEN!" SAID MARIAN, LAUGHING

GEORGE CALTHORPE'S MISTAKE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"Good news, mother dear!" exclaimed Ruth Hilton, joyously, coming into the small sitting-room where her mother was at work, and seeming to bring a ray of the winter sunshine in with her. "What do you think?"

"Well, my darling," her mother returned, with a sad smile. "How can I think until you have told me?"

"Mrs. Varcy will take me as governess for her two little girls."

"Mrs. Varcy?"

"Yes."

"But, Ruth—"

"Well, mother!"

"I do not think she is an agreeable woman, though she is a rich one."

"Perhaps not. But then, mother, there is the adage, 'paupers cannot be choosers.'"

"True, dear," with a heavy sigh; "and we are very little removed from paupers."

"I think it is a lucky chance."

"How did she hear of you?"

"Well, you know, mother, that Mrs. Camelot thinks a good deal of my playing, and Mrs. Varcy heard me perform this afternoon at her 'at home,' and she asked Mrs. Camelot who I was, and whether I would go out to teach; and finally she offered me fifty pounds a year. For that I am to give her eldest daughter music lessons as well."

"It is not much for you, my darling."

"But then think, mother. I have never been out before, and have no references, except Mrs. Camelot, who is kindness itself. But she has no children who require tuition, and really I think it would be a pity to throw this chance away."

"I suppose it would. And yet, Ruth, I hardly

like your going to Mrs. Varcy. I have heard of her as being very overbearing and disagreeable, and I suppose you will have to go as a resident governess!"

"Yes. I asked her if daily tuition would suit, but she said she required a governess who would live in the house."

"Well, there is this to be said, if you are not happy there you are not bound to stay."

"Of course not, mother."

"I do not know what I shall do without my sunbeam, or, for the matter of that, the boys either," the elder woman said, with a sigh.

"And, if I could, I would rather stay with you and the children, mother; but I only make a few shillings now occasionally, and the rent is getting in arrears. Remember there will be one month the less to feed when I am away, and fifty pounds a year. I shall be able to send you the greater part of it, and I am sure you want it, you poor darling!" bending down to kiss her fondly.

"Unselfish as ever, my Ruth."

"And the boys, dear! They are getting beyond

your and my tuition. What a great thing it would be if we could send them both to school."

"Yes. I own I have rather an objection to their going to a Board-school, but I fear there will be no help for it, unless—"

"Unless I make the money to send them to a private one. Do not be downhearted, mother, there is no knowing; this stroke of luck may lead to others."

"Heaven grant it, my child; we have seen a great deal of misfortune."

"Brighter days are in store for you, and all of us, mother mine; of that I feel assured."

But the elder woman only shook her head and sighed mournfully as her daughter moved away to change her walking attire.

She did not like to damp the young girl's enthusiasm, or throw cold water upon her unselfish hopes and expectations; but fate had dealt her so many hard knocks of late that it was no wonder that she should view things with desponding eyes, and fall to share Ruth's conviction that the silver lining was beginning to show through the dark cloud that had enveloped them.

Mrs. Grey, who during the conversation with her daughter had been busily engaged mending the clothes of her two boys, whose principal aim in life appeared to be to tear them, had been a beauty in her youth.

In spite of all that she had gone through she still retained traces of her former attractiveness.

She had been twice married. When very young—scarcely seventeen—to Ruth's father, a very wealthy man. He idolised his girl-wife, and lavished upon her everything that his love could suggest.

But his felicity was short-lived. He died three years after their marriage, leaving everything he possessed absolutely to his young widow, not settling anything upon his baby daughter—a circumstance which Mrs. Grey now often bitterly regretted; for had a fair sum been settled upon Ruth her second husband would have been unable to make ducks and drakes of it, as he had, unfortunately, of her whole property.

For several years she had remained steadfast to the memory of her first love, notwithstanding the fact that she had many offers, her fair face attracting suitors almost as much as her great wealth; but not one of them could tempt her to enter the state of matrimony a second time until she met Herbert Grey.

Handsome, fascinating, he came of a good but greatly impoverished family, and it was the wealth of the young widow that first attracted his attention. Gay, brilliant, elegant, a thorough man of the world who never denied himself anything, it was a wonder to his friends and acquaintances how he managed to procure all the luxuries he indulged in.

Hunting, racing, betting, yachting, gambling at Monte Carlo and elsewhere, he was ever in the foremost rank of the extravagant gilded youth whose purses, as a rule, are larger than their brains.

He was over a welcome guest in society's drawing-rooms, for society took him at his own estimate, and was unaware of the fact that its brilliant, petted darling was head-over-ears in debt, and was on the look-out for some rich heiress or wealthy widow to save him from utter ruin.

It was hardly to be wondered at that simple Mary Hilton was soon won over to believe that he was madly in love with her. His handsome face and engaging manner completely fascinated her, making her forget her resolution of never marrying again; and she consented to become his wife, thinking that her happiness was now assured, and that her second husband would prove as good a one as her first.

But the awakening came only too soon, and bitter it proved to the deluded wife.

At the time of her second marriage she had made over her property unreservedly to him, thinking that, of course, their interests now were identical, and she would trust him implicitly.

But Herbert Grey was a very different man from Bernard Hilton. He represented to his

wife that he could easily double her wealth by clever speculation; and he artfully added that by this means Ruth might become a fabulously rich woman; and Ruth's mother, believing him and trusting him as she had trusted her first husband, let him have his way, and took no precautions to secure any of the wealth Bernard Hilton had left her, either to herself or his daughter.

Grey's first act when he found himself possessor of his wife's fortune was to pay off his debts, which were very heavy. He then plunged still deeper into extravagance and dissipation of every description, and at the end of five or six years of outward glitter and show, but inward anxiety to the unhappy wife, the crash came, and they were totally beggared.

Instead of then working and trying to retrieve their fallen fortunes, Herbert Grey basely deserted the trusting woman who had so confidently placed her all in his unscrupulous hands, leaving his two little sons without a career or word of farewell.

The shock so prostrated Mrs. Grey that she was helpless for some time after; and had it not been for Ruth, then a beautiful girl of eighteen, they would have come very near starvation.

With the small sum that could be scraped together from the sale of a few ornaments that had escaped from Grey's rapacious hands, and the remnant of the furniture, she did a great deal.

She took a cheap lodging, to which she removed her mother and half-brothers. She cooked, she made her little brothers' clothes, she taught them, as they could not afford to send them to school. She painted fairly, and managed to sell some of her water-colours, though she received wretchedly bad prices for them. She was a good linguist and a musician of no mean excellence; and through Mrs. Camelot's kindness, who had known them in the days of their show and glitter, she was sometimes engaged to play at afternoon "at homes."

But still, in spite of all she could do, it was very difficult to make both ends meet. The modest rent was not always forthcoming, and there was sometimes a lack of food for the four mouths there were to feed, two of which were generally hungry, with boys' healthy appetites.

Ruth found that the absolute necessities of life cost a great deal more than she had any idea of formerly.

A rich man can cut down his expenses, a poor man can't. Superfluous luxuries may be suppressed, but not healthy appetites.

Under these circumstances Mrs. Varcy's offer of fifty pounds a year, and her board and washing, seemed to the girl to be too good to be refused; and so she had combated her mother's objection to her acceptance of it.

When she returned to the sitting-room she found that the boys had come in, and were clamouring for their tea, their appetites having been sharpened by the keen wind.

She busied herself to get the frugal meal, which was all they could afford; and as she watched her brothers devouring the bread and scraps with such gusto, she determined that it should not be her fault if in the future they had not something to supplement it, and stay their hunger with.

The boys, when they heard it, did not at all approve of the idea of Ruth's going away as governess. They were very fond of their half-sister. The youngest, Bertie, exclaimed, adding up to her with a suspicious moisture about his blue eyes, which wanted very little provocation to brim over in tears,—

"Don't want you to go, Ruth; want you to stay with us always!"

"I would if I could, dear!" Ruth said, taking up the curly-headed little urchin, and fondly kissing him. "But we have no money to pay the rent, and I must go and earn some."

"Why can't that nasty Mrs. Varcy pay the rent without taking you away from us?" demanded Bertie, adding viciously, "I 'ates her, I do," forgetting to aspirate his h's in his vehemence.

But Ruth let it pass this time, though she usually was very careful not to let the boys lapse in their grammar.

"She could not do that, dear, when I have not earned the money," she answered, gently.

"She's a nasty old thing, that's what she is!" Bertie said, defiantly.

"But, dear, I want to send both you and John to school, and I cannot do it without money."

"Don't want to go to school!" he pouted.

"But you will like it when you get there, Bertie; that is," she added to herself with a half-sigh, "if I am ever able to send you. They will make a clever man of you!"

"Don't want to be clever! I only want you!" persisted Bertie.

"Please, Ruth, I should like to go to school," here said the elder boy, John, who had been listening earnestly to the conversation between his brother and half-sister.

"Why would you like to go when Bertie seems so much against it?" asked Ruth.

"Because, if they make me a clever man, I could earn heaps of money, and then you and mother need not work, but live in a fine house, and have beautiful things," replied the boy, his eyes glistening with enthusiasm.

"Well, dear," Ruth said, "I only hope that we may be able to send you to a good school, and then, perhaps, your ambition may be gratified."

"I am sorry to be obliged to part with you, even for a time, my darling!" Mrs. Grey said to her daughter, after the boys had gone to bed; "but I suppose it cannot be helped, I shall miss you terribly! You are our good angel! I do not know what I should have done without you all this dreadful time!"

"Now, mother, dear, you must not despond; let us look forward to brighter days. I shall come and see you every Sunday while the Varcys are in town. It is not a very great distance—at all events, not too far for me to walk to see my loved ones!"

"Yes, dear, that will be better than not seeing you at all; still I shall miss you through the week-days."

"You must help me to get ready my clothes."

"You ought to have some new ones, but I am afraid we cannot manage that."

"I shall do very well, mother, with what I have until my first quarter's salary is due, and you may be able to spare me a few of yours till then!"

"Of course, dear. You shall have anything of mine you choose to take. I have not much left now. I wish I had for your sake; still, there is a little real lace, and one silk dress, which, I dare say, we can manage to alter for you."

"But, mother, I do not like to take your one gown; I can get on very well without it."

"I would rather you had it, darling! It is not of much use to me now, I go nowhere. Come into the other room, and we will try it on."

It did not require much alteration, and, with the addition of a little lace, made a dress quite smart enough to be worn, should Ruth's presence be required, in Mrs. Varcy's drawing-room, when guests would be present.

"And now, my darling!" Mrs. Grey said, when the alterations were completed, "there is something you shall have that is worthy of you. I meant to give it you on your twenty-first birthday; but you are not far off that, and shall have it now. See, are they not beautiful!" and producing a morocco leather case she opened it, and displayed, to her daughter's wondering gaze, a beautiful necklace of rubies set most exquisitely in Indian gold.

"Oh, mother!" was Ruth's enraptured comment, as she gazed at the sparkling jewels lying on their white velvet bed.

"They are your own property, dear; they belonged to your grandmother, Anabel Hilton."

"And you have kept them for me, mother!" Ruth exclaimed, half reproachfully, though, woman-like, she could not help feeling a thrill of delight at the thought of being the possessor



of such a beautiful ornament. "When you were in such straitened circumstances, why, these would have realised a large sum!"

"They were not mine to sell. I made no objection to my diamonds going when—when, you understand, dear!"

Even now Mrs. Gray could never speak calmly of her recalcitrant husband, who had so basely deserted her and her boys, after stripping her of nearly everything she possessed; "but I would not allow your rubies—an heirloom in the Hilton family—to be swept away with the rest."

"Poor mother!"

Mrs. Gray went on. "I would not show them to you before because I knew you would sacrifice them at once for us."

"But, mother, they were yours!"

"No, dear; only mine in trust for you. Shortly after you were born, Ruth, your poor father brought that case of jewels to me. 'These are for our little Ruth,' he said. 'They have been in the family several hundred years, and there is a superstition connected with them, but I forget what it is; but anyway, Mary,' he added, laughingly, 'remember that these are for our little daughter. You may do what you like with your other jewels, but these must be Ruth's when she comes of age. Until then you may wear them, but you or she may never part with them.' I looked upon them as a sacred trust for you. I now fulfil that trust by giving them to you; but, darling, remember, by your poor father's express injunction, you are not to part with them."

"I will not, mother, unless sorely driven, indeed, by want. I do not think I should be wronging him then by parting with them."

"Of course your father never had any idea of such a contingency happening; and but for my fatal folly it would never have arisen."

"I will not have you blaming yourself," Ruth cried, hastily, "you are everything that is good. There, mother, I want to try the effect of the jewels," clasping them round Mrs. Gray's neck. "They look beautiful; but oh! they would be rather incongruous things for a poor governess to wear. I do not think I will take them with me."

"Yes, dear, you had better take them; they are yours now. You may have some opportunity of wearing them; and, remember, though you may be a governess now, yet you are a Hilton, and the Hiltons can hold up their heads with the highest in the land."

So it was agreed that when Ruth went to Mrs. Varcy's the rubies should go with her.

Notwithstanding their poverty, Mrs. Gray was very much averse to the idea of Ruth going out as a governess; but the latter took a commonsense view of the matter, and talked her mother over to her way of viewing it, and painted the future so brightly that the smiles came back to Mrs. Gray's careworn face, and she began to share her daughter's rosy hopes.

In spite of her self-command, Ruth nearly broke down when the day came for her to take leave of her mother and brothers, the former of whom was weeping silently, but the latter noisily, both boys clinging to her, and loudly declaring that they would not part with her; and it was only by dint of promising Bertie a large horse and cart, that he had seen in a toy-shop window and longed for hopelessly, and John a volume of "Robinson Crusoe" out of the very first money she should receive, that she finally managed to escape from their delinquent fingers, and after a last embrace from her mother, was fairly on her way to her new life.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. VARCY was the wife of a rich City merchant. Mr. Varcy was a quiet, unassuming man, kind-tempered, and very fond of his children, whom he spoiled behind their mother's back—for it must be owned that he stood in awe of his better-half, though she had been a penniless girl when he married her, and was now as proud and overbearing as boggars are on horseback.

She was a pretty woman of about forty, floridly

handsome, and with an overweening opinion of herself and everything belonging to her, save and except only the before-mentioned husband, whom she snubbed on every possible occasion.

She quite ignored her own past poverty, and had a very great contempt for people less rich in worldly goods than herself, forgetting that she owed her diamonds, her horses, her carriages and all the other luxuries she enjoyed to her despised husband, whom she had married only and solely for his money.

For several years her family had consisted of one child, Marian; but when the latter was about ten years old, to the astonishment of everybody, twin little girls made their appearance on the scene.

It was these children who were to be Ruth's pupils. They were now turned seven, while their elder sister, Marian—a pretty, fair girl of seventeen, was to profit by Ruth's proficiency in music, to improve her own somewhat desultory acquaintance with the piano.

Mrs. Varcy fully determined that the "young person" she had taken out of charity to teach her daughters should be kept in her place—ignoring the fact that for accomplishments like those Ruth was able to impart she would have to have given three times the amount to masters.

She intended Ruth to be a sort of upper servant. She would have no nonsense of her being received as one of the family.

She knew perfectly well that Ruth Hilton's birth was higher than her own; but, as she was her paid dependent, with the vulgarity of a little mind she thought she had every right to snub her.

But Mrs. Varcy soon found that her governess was not to be so easily "sat upon" as her meek and good-natured spouse. Ruth was never forward or assuming, but her natural dignity enabled her to hold her own, and more than once Mrs. Varcy felt abashed when the girl's calm, clear eyes were fixed upon her in surprise when she commenced one of her tirades, and the employer instinctively felt that her paid dependent was immeasurably her superior.

Ruth possessed the art of making herself respected, and Mrs. Varcy inwardly chafed at the knowledge that she could not abash or put her in the wrong.

What added to her dislike was that the rest of her family seemed to have taken such a strong liking for the new governess.

Mr. Varcy, when he dared, showed her many little kindnesses, and tried to make her feel at home in his gorgeous house.

The twins, Ada and Edith, soon became greatly attached to her; she was so gentle yet so firm with them, and seemed to make the thorny path of learning easy to their youthful intelligences; but what vexed Mrs. Varcy more than all was the fact that Marian at once struck up a romantic friendship with Ruth; insisted on having her down in the drawing-room to play on every possible occasion when they had any visitors; treated her just as though she were a sister; and, in answer to her mother's remonstrances, declared that "she knew perfectly well Ruth's playing threw hers into the shade, and she was perfectly sure that friends much preferred hearing a masterly rendering of Beethoven and Mozart to her jingle-jangle; and she, Marian, hated sharps and flats, and was not going to take the trouble of practising them," and, as she was somewhat of a spoiled child, having been the only one for several years, and, above all, not being the least afraid of her imperious mother, she generally managed to have her own way; and Ruth Hilton was made much of in a manner that fairly disgusted Mrs. Varcy, particularly as she found herself powerless to put a stop to Marian's folly.

Not that she had any fault to find with the progress the twins were making in their education. Indeed, the children got on wonderfully, for being fond of their governess they paid all the more attention to her instruction; and then they knew that if they were good, Ruth would tell them such wonderful fairy-tales, or dress their dolls so beautifully in their half-holidays!

Indeed, at such times they preferred remaining

with her to going out in the carriage with their mother, she was so much more pleasant a companion.

Loving and understanding children she knew how to awaken their interest and sympathy. She told them all about her own little half-brothers, who were not much older than the twins themselves; and the little girls would have liked to have gone with her to see them, but this she would not permit, for she knew how angry it might make their mother were she to take them to the poor lodging which sheltered her own mother and the boys, and she had no wish that her pupils should get into hot water on her account; so Ada and Edith had to content themselves with sending John and Bertie toys and sweetmeats every time Ruth returned home.

On the whole Ruth Hilton's life was not unhappy in the Varcys' house.

True, the mistress of the mansion made herself as disagreeable as she could, but this was more than counterbalanced by the kindness shown her by the other members of the family. She found that she could send the greater part of her salary to her mother, for Marian was always making her presents, and would take no refusal. Now it would be half-a-dozen pairs of gloves, then a handkerchief sachet filled with fine lawn handkerchiefs or something similarly useful—presents that were given in so kindly a spirit that Ruth, in spite of her independence, felt it would be childish to refuse when her acceptance of them gave such evident pleasure to the generous donor.

So the months went on, and Marian's eighteenth birthday was drawing near.

She was wild with delight, for she was to "come out" on that date, and a grand ball was to be given for her *début* by her father and mother.

Her head was filled with visions of forthcoming gaiety; she could not settle down to anything. It was in vain that Ruth urged her to take her music lessons—she might as well have spoken to the winds. How could Marian sit down to stium—this was her own irreverent expression—the piano when there were dressmakers to be consulted, wonderful shoes and gloves to be tried on, and the house generally to be put in a pleasant turmoil!

So Ruth turned her attention to her little charges, but even the schoolroom was not sacred from the incursions of the coming festivity.

One morning, while she was engaged with her pupils, Marian came with a rush like a whirlwind into the schoolroom, her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Put away the lesson-books this instant, you dear old thing. I want you to listen to me," she cried, impatiently.

"But surely your communication will wait till your sisters' lessons are over!" Ruth said, quietly.

"No, it will not; do as I tell you."

"But, Marian—"

"I will have no 'buts'; do as I say, and put the books away at once."

"If you are determined—"

"I am. You may as well shut up the books, for I will not let you teach!"

"There is no hope for it, then, I suppose!"

"None whatever."

"There, then," Ruth said, shutting up the books; while the little girl, nothing loth to have their lessons interrupted, looked at their sister with wide-open eyes.

"That is right. Now are you not curious?"

"To hear your news! No, I do not think I am."

"And yet it concerns you."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. Are you ready to listen?"

"I am all attention."

"Well, you know my birthday will be on the fourteenth!"

"Yes."

"And you know my coming out ball is fixed for that evening!"

"Yes, again."

"Well, this you do not know."

"What is that I am in ignorance of?"

"Why—but you must guess."

"What am I to guess?"
 "Try and find out. Now, for guess number one."

"Is it that you will have a new dress?—but of course, that is a settled thing."

"No; guess again."

"I give it up. I never was a good hand at guessing."

"I suppose I must tell you, as you will not guess. Well, then, I have ordered your gown from Madame Stephanie."

"My gown!" Ruth repeated, bewildered.

"Yes, it is to be exactly like mine—pure white, trimmed with real lilacs-of-the-valley and orchids. Will it not be beautiful?"

"For you, dear, yes. It will just suit you. But of course, I shall not appear at your ball."

"Of course you will!"

"My dear Marian!"

"I have ordered your dress, and most assuredly you will wear it at my coming-out ball on the fourteenth."

"But what does your mother say to this fresh freak of yours?"

"Oh, mamma was just wild at first; but I told her I had made up my mind that you should appear at my ball, and she had to give in. Besides, for a wonder, papa backed me up, said I should have my own way, and told me to order your gown at the same time as my own. So, you see, you must come, if only to please me."

"It is very kind indeed of you, Marian, to wish to give me this pleasure, only I am sorry your mamma should be vexed," said Ruth, gently.

She was more touched than she would have cared to own, for to the girl of two-and-twenty the prospect of a brilliant ball was very alluring, especially after the hardships she had endured.

"Then that is settled. I will take care that you have plenty of partners. But you must not fear that you will be classed among the wall-flowers. I declare, Ruth, you will the prettiest girl in the room!" rattled on Marian, who had not a particle of jealousy in her composition.

"I imagine that will not be the opinion of the gentlemen when you are by," smiled Ruth.

"Oh! I am well enough," averred Marian, coolly. "But I know I am not half so handsome or so clever as you are; and that is what makes mamma so wild. She fancies you will cut me out, and she hates to think that anyone else can be better than her own belongings."

"Marian, dear, do not be angry with me."

"What are you going to lecture me about now?"

"I do not want to lecture you, dear; but I do not think you should talk of your mother in that way."

"Have I shocked you, you prim old thing!"

"Well, Marian, I have always honoured my own mother."

"Oh! but yours is very different from mine. I did not mean to shock you; but it is quite true, nevertheless," and Marian danced away, leaving the occupants of the schoolroom to resume their interrupted studies with what attention they could bring to bear upon them.

The morning of the ball came at last.

"Lessons were not to be thought of. Ruth must give Ade and Edith a holiday," Marian declared, and, much to the little girls' delight, their sister managed to have her own way.

Lesson-books were banished for the day, and they were allowed to assist Ruth and Marian in the floral and other decorations, and even made surreptitious visits to the kitchen, where grand preparations for the supper were going on, and where the good-natured cook let them taste various of the dainties, and sent them away delighted with their hands full of bonbons, almonds and raisins, and crystallized fruits, which proceedings would have brought down Mrs. Varcy's wrath upon the heads of all concerned had she been cognizant of them; only, luckily, that pompous lady was too much engaged superintending the finishing touches being put to her own gorgeous costume by her maid to be aware of Ruth's heinous neglect of her duty in allowing her young charges to roam about, and so far forget what was due to themselves as her daughters

as to descend to the kitchen and the company of the servants.

At length the evening arrived. All the preparations were completed. The twins sent off to bed, though they begged hard to be allowed to remain up to see the first of the arrivals; but their mother was inexorable on this point. She had had to give way in the matter of Ruth appearing at the ball, so she exercised her authority upon the unoffending little girls, and denied them the simple pleasure they craved.

When she was dressed Marian sent her maid to Ruth's room to render her any assistance she might require; but Miss Hilton had been accustomed to wait upon herself for some years now, and her toilette was almost completed before Ellen made her appearance.

"You do look lovely, miss!" the girl exclaimed, in open-eyed admiration. She had been accustomed to see the governess in sober greys and blacks, and the sight of her in a gown the counterpart of her young lady's, elegant in its expensive simplicity, fairly took away her breath.

"Ah! Ellen, fine feathers make fine birds sometimes," said Ruth, with a smile.

"Yes, miss, your dress is beautiful: just like Miss Marian's, and your gloves and even the fan just the same long white feathers! Why, miss, you might be sisters now you're dressed alike!"

"I am glad you approve of my dress, Ellen, for it was your young mistress who chose it," returned Ruth, taking up the magnificent bouquet of orchids which had been placed on her dressing-table. "I think I am ready now."

"Wait one minute, Miss Hilton."

"Well, Ellen, is there anything wrong?"

"Only, miss, you ought to have something round your throat. Miss Marian has her pearls, but I know she will lend you one of her other necklaces. I will go and ask her," the maid said, good-naturedly, and was going off on her errand when Ruth stopped her by saying,—

"You need not ask Miss Marian for one, Ellen, for I have one of my own if you really think I require it."

The maid's words had brought to her recollection the ruby necklace her mother had given her. Here, indeed, was an opportunity; and why should she not wear it! It would not look incongruous with her present attire.

She took out the case containing the jewels and opened it.

"Ah! miss, but they are splendid!" exclaimed the admiring Ellen. "I do believe Mrs. Varcy herself has nothing half so handsome as those!"

"They are beautiful!" Ruth said, taking them from the case so that the light flashed upon them, bringing out their lovely colour.

"Let me fasten them for you, miss," Ellen said, and she clasped them round Ruth's white throat, where they glittered and scintillated like sparks of deep red fire.

"There, miss, you're just perfect," she declared. "I like them even better than Miss Varcy's pearls; they give just one touch of colour."

"Ruth, are you ready?" called Marian's fresh young voice at this juncture, and she came swiftly along the corridor to her friend's room, looking a fair enough vision in her airy ball-dress to gladden any man's heart, were he anyway a reasonable mortal.

"Yes, I am quite ready," replied Ruth. "How well you look, Marian, dear!"

"And I can return the compliment. I never saw you look better! Did I not say you would be the best-looking girl in the room?"

"I am afraid you are a flatterer, Marian."

"No, it is true! But, oh! catching sight of the necklace, "where did you get those lovely rubies! They must be worth a fortune!"

"Not quite," replied Ruth, smiling at her enthusiasm. "They belonged to my grandmother and great-grandmother before her. In fact, they are a family heirloom."

"Ah! I knew you came of an old family, Ruth. I wish you would tell me about those

jewels. I am sure there must be some history attached to them."

"I believe there is, but I do not know it. They have been in the Hilton family some hundreds of years. They are all that are left now of its former glory. My mother kept them for me when everything else was swept away."

"How nice it must be to have jewels like that, that belonged to our ancestors! Now mine," touching the pearls round her neck, "are quite modern. Papa bought them for me, only a short time ago."

"But they are not less beautiful on that account. Listen, I think some of the guests are arriving."

"Then we had better go down at once," and together the young girls descended the staircase and entered the ball-room.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. VARCH, in a gorgeous costume of crimson velvet, was already receiving her guests. She glanced critically at the girls when they entered, and it was with a feeling of suppressed displeasure that she saw that Ruth, the despised governess, was the more striking-looking of the two.

Taller and slimmer than Marian, she moved with a peculiar elegance that would not have disgraced a duchess, while the high-bred features and dark loveliness quite threw Marian's fair prettiness into the shade.

Mrs. Varcy noted, too, with an ominous snap of the teeth, the ruby necklace Miss Hilton was wearing.

"She never came by that honestly I'll be bound, the designing minx," was her amiable, mental comment. "I do wish Marian would not be so absurd. She is actually introducing her to several young men. What a fool the girl is, just like her father! I can hardly believe that she is my daughter."

In spite of the hostess's private animadversions, the objects of them were both enjoying themselves with the zest of youth and innocence.

The rooms were rapidly filling with guests. The lavish decorations, the brilliant lights, the costly exotics, and the splendid costumes of the fair women who promenade the rooms on the arms of attendant cavaliers reminded Ruth forcibly of the time, soon after her mother's second marriage, when she, too, was surrounded by a blaze of splendour; and the poverty that had since befallen Mrs. Grey and herself, through no fault of her own, seemed all the harder to bear for this glimpse back into the enchanted land. But Ruth Hilton was young, and youth soon shakes off sombre thoughts. She determined for that one evening to give herself up to the enjoyment of the pleasure Marian had so kindly provided for her.

Mrs. Varcy's feelings were the reverse of amiable as she saw the sensation her governess created, and the eagerness of the young men to secure a place on her programme. She angrily resolved that never again would she permit such folly on Marian's part. Why, two or three people had actually asked her, Mrs. Varcy, who that beautiful girl was? Beautiful, indeed. She could see no beauty in that white face, and she soon let the inquirers know that it was only her children's governess they were raving about.

But she could not proclaim this fact aloud to the crowd of young men who surrounded Miss Hilton the whole evening, and who had been introduced by Marian; and it was not the slightest use complaining to Mr. Varcy, who only said, in answer to his better-half's strictures on her conduct, "that he could see nothing wrong in her way of behaving. She was quite right to enjoy herself, and, for his part, he did not blame the young fellows for running after so pretty a girl."

So she had to put up with the mortification of seeing Ruth more sought after than her own daughter, in honour of whose birthday the ball was given. As for Marian, not the slightest

feeling of jealousy troubled her. She was delighted at her friend's success, and religiously brought up to her every fresh gentleman who arrived—that is, provided he was a dancer.

When the evening was about half over, Marian came up to Ruth with a tall, fine-looking man by her side.

"Mr. Calthorpe begs for the honour of an introduction, Ruth," she said, adding, "I hope your card is not quite filled up!"

"I am afraid it is," Ruth replied, glancing at her programme.

"Let me see," exclaimed Marian, holding out her hand for the tablets in question. "Ah, yes, I can manage it. Here is Mr. Somers's name. He will not mind giving up one of his dances, I know."

"What a good fairy you are, Miss Varcy! You knew how anxious I was for a dance with you—!" George Calthorpe was beginning, when Marian exclaimed,—

"There is Harry, that is, I mean Mr. Somers," correcting herself with a blush. "Now we will make it all right!"

"You have no objection, I hope, to the change of partners!" Mr. Calthorpe said, bending down over Ruth, while Marian was effecting the transfer with Mr. Somers—a transfer he would only allow on condition that her name took the place of Ruth's on his programme, to which arrangement the girl made very slight demur.

"Oh, no!" Ruth answered, wondering why she felt the colour rise to her cheeks as she encountered the gaze from a pair of dark, grey eyes. "I only know Mr. Somers very slightly, and I do not think he will mind."

"Then it is my gain. There is the music beginning; and I believe this is the dance I am so fortunate to have secured. Shall we join the dancers?" he asked.

Ruth assented, and thought that never had she enjoyed a dance more than this, with the tall, rather grave-looking man, who was almost an utter stranger to her.

"You must be very fond of dancing, you dance so exquisitely!" Mr. Calthorpe said, when the music ceased, and he had found her a seat in a retired corner.

"Yes, I am fond of it," she acknowledged.

"I suppose you go out a great deal!"

"No. This is my first ball since I was a child. I used to dance a great deal then."

"Ah! I heard something of its being a coming-out ball. I suppose you know, Miss Ruth, that I have only been brought here to-night by a friend! I hardly know anybody in the room, so it is very kind of you and Miss Marian to take pity upon a lonely man like myself!"

"I am sure I—" Ruth was beginning, when Marian made her appearance, escorted by the indefatigable Mr. Somers.

"Ruth, I have been looking for you everywhere!" she cried.

"Well, dear!"

"Mr. Somers and I are going in to supper, and we want you to come too."

"I shall be pleased to come with you!"

"Mr. Calthorpe," Marian continued, "are you engaged to take any lady in to supper?"

"I have not that pleasure."

"Well, will you bring Ruth? I have ordered them to keep us a nice little table in the corner that will just take four. It will be ever so much pleasanter than at the large table; we can have all the fun to ourselves."

"That will be glorious, if Miss Ruth will permit me to escort her, but I fear I may be already forestalled."

"Have you any supper engagement, Ruth?"

"No, dear."

"Then come along, and see if we don't enjoy ourselves."

And Marian's prophecy was correct, for it would be hard to say, of the four gathered round that little table in the corner, which enjoyed him or herself most.

That single dance was not the only one George Calthorpe managed to secure with Ruth that evening.

As is often the case after supper, there was considerable confusion among the dancers, some declaring it was one number, some another; and

in consequence of this confusion many of Ruth's partners came for the wrong dance, or did not turn up at the right time.

Profiting by this state of affairs, Mr. Calthorpe, who scarcely left Miss Hilton's side the whole evening, had three or four more dances with her than were legitimately his.

He was evidently struck with the beautiful girl, who was so entertaining, yet so unassuming.

The liking was mutual. Ruth thought she had never seen a nobler-looking man, and felt herself irresistibly attracted towards him, in spite of his being many years her senior.

When at last Ruth Hilton laid her head upon her pillow, agreeably tired out with the unwonted amusement of the evening, it was only in her dreams to see the soft look in the dark, grey eyes that had lingered so lovingly on her fair face, and to hear again in her sleep the deep musical tones which had murmured gently in her waking ears.

The sun was high in the heavens the next morning ere she woke from her pleasant dreams, to find Marian standing by the bedside, smiling down upon her.

"What, up and dressed, Marian!" she exclaimed, astonished, for Miss Varcy, as a rule, was not given to early rising.

"Do you not know that is past ten!" the other returned, laughing at the amusement on her friend's face. "You lazy girl. However, it is my fault, for I would not allow them to call you, thinking you must be tired after the evening."

"What a good girl you are, Marian! But I must get up at once, because of the lessons."

"Oh! bother the lessons! I am not going to let you teach to-day, and so I told mamma."

"But, dear, the children!"

"They will not hurt for one day. I sent them off to the housekeeper's room, where, by this time, I should say, they are fairly on the road to make themselves ill with the 'goodies' Mrs. Price is stuffing them with."

Ruth could not help laughing.

"I hope, indeed, they will not make themselves ill," she said.

"Do them good," Marian declared. "But now make haste and dress, and when you are ready I will tell Ellen to bring your breakfast to my boudoir; everything is in a turmoil downstairs. I want to have a good long talk with you about the ball."

When both girls were seated in Marian's pretty room, which had been expressly settled to suit her taste by her father's orders, and after the dainty breakfast set had been cleared away, Marian settled herself comfortably in a lounging chair, and advised her friend to do the same.

"Well, Ruth, how did you enjoy yourself last night?" she said.

"Very much, indeed."

"So did I. It was awfully jolly!"

"Well, it certainly was jolly, if one may be allowed the expression; but I did not find anything 'awful' about it," smiled Ruth.

"Oh, you know what I mean," Marian returned. "I only hope all the balls I shall go to now I am 'out' will be half as nice."

"I hope so, too; your 'coming-out' ball was certainly a great success."

"How do you like Mr. Calthorpe?" Marian asked, suddenly.

In spite of herself Ruth felt the colour flame up in her cheeks at this sudden mention of the person who was still the principal factor in her thoughts.

"How do I like Mr. Calthorpe?" she repeated. "I—I think he is very agreeable."

"Is that all?" Miss Varcy demanded, laughing. "Do you know, Ruth, that I am inclined to think you made a conquest last night?"

"Oh, Marian!"

"Yes, I am perfectly positive. Were I to ask Mr. Calthorpe what he thought of you his answer would be that he found you more than agreeable. But, seriously, dear, I should be very glad if he were to propose to you."

"Mr. Calthorpe would not think of doing that, especially after so short an acquaintance," said Ruth, covered in confusion, for fear that she

might have been forward or unmaidenly for her friend to have so soon discovered the mutual liking that had sprung up between herself and the man to whom she had only been introduced so short a time before.

"I wish he would," Marian persisted; "and I will tell you why. Last night mamma did not know that Mr. Calthorpe is a very rich man, so did not take much notice of him. But one of her cronies has been here this morning and told her; and now, what do you think?"

"I cannot tell, dear."

"Why, mamma thinks he is just the husband for me. I know what that will be; he will be asked here, and I shall be thrown at his head at every turn."

"But, Marian," Ruth spoke with an effort, "if Mr. Calthorpe is a good man, and he looks as though there were nothing mean or ignoble about him—why should you object to him as a husband?"

"You dear, silly little goose! You are as blind as the proverbial mole! George Calthorpe is all you say, and more, he is a hero; but he is twenty years older than I am. And besides—"

"Besides!"

"I should not care for him as a husband, because—I love someone else!"

"Oh, Marian!" Ruth exclaimed, as a light suddenly broke in upon her. "Do you mean to say Mr. Somers?"

"I do. We love one another; and, what is more, we mean to marry! I know papa will not object; he always says it is better to be happy than rich, and Harry is not rich, though he is comfortably off; and if mamma makes herself disagreeable we shall either run away and get married, or wait till I am of age, when she cannot interfere. You see now why I wish Mr. Calthorpe would propose for you."

"You said he was a hero. What has he done to deserve such a title?" asked Ruth, who could not help feeling glad that Marian's affections were engaged, and not to George Calthorpe.

"It appears he is a friend of one of Harry's friends, and the latter raves about him, calls him a hero, and I don't know what besides. Only, privately, I do not mind telling you that I much prefer Harry; Mr. Calthorpe is too grave and serious for me."

"Yes; but what heroic action did he perform?"

"Oh! he saved the lives of a hundred people or more, Harry's friend among the number."

"How?"

"He was on board a vessel that was wrecked. Harry's friend says it was terrible. The sea running mountains high, the wind roaring and walling through the broken rigging and torn sails, the timbers creaking as the vessel was hurled by succeeding waves farther on the rock which was her destruction, the shrieks of the frightened women and children—all made up a picture of horror that he would not forget till his dying day."

"It must have been terrible indeed!"

"Ay, a fearful time to pass through; and to add to the horror they could see people on the distant shore, though they could not render them the slightest assistance for the frightful breakers that rolled between them with such overwhelming force. Well, George Calthorpe volunteered to try and swim ashore with a rope when not one of the sailors would venture on so perilous an errand. Having tied a life-belt on, he plunged into the seething boiling waters amid the prayers of the women for his safety, the wild buzzards of the men at a deed of daring that they could not emulate. It was a hard battle with the raging elements. Those left on board hardly dared watch the brave swimmer; his inevitable destruction seemed so imminent. Many a time he disappeared as they thought never to rise again. But still he struggled gallantly on through it all. The life was nearly battered out of him on the cruel rocks. You can see a scar he still bears on his forehead; but, bruised, bleeding, exhausted, and nearly dead as he was, he yet managed to get the line on shore."

"And the people were saved!" asked Ruth, who had listened to the narrative with breathless eagerness.

"Every one of them, down to a baby of a few months' old. Do you wonder now that Harry's friend calls George Calthorpe a hero?"

"No, indeed; but it is just what I can imagine he would do. Nothing cowardly could lurk beneath such an exterior."

"Ah! Ruth, I don't believe the admiration is all on his side. Before long I can see that a fresh governess will be wanted for the twins. Now, good-bye for the present, dear! I suppose I must go and see if mamma wants me to go out with her; only, remember, I count upon your assistance. I will not be thrown at Mr. Calthorpe's head," and kissing her, Marian ran gaily down the stairs, humming the tune of one of the waltzes which had been played the night before.

Left alone, Ruth gave herself up to a delicious reverie. Was it true that George Calthorpe really took an interest in her?

He had scarcely left her side the whole evening; but then it did not follow that, because he had done so, he should have fallen in love with her at first sight, as Marian's words seemed to imply. It was folly to suppose it; she would think no more of the matter or of him. But though she came to this wise resolution, Ruth's thoughts were not to be so easily controlled, and she found herself again and again wondering when he would call, and hoping that she might have another opportunity of seeing the dark eyes and grave face of the man who had proved himself such a hero.

Ruth was fated to see him again. A day or two after the ball, when she was dressed to take the little girls for their morning walk, Marian entered the room and announced her intention of accompanying them.

"But will not Mrs. Varcy want you with her in the carriage?" inquired Ruth, it being that lady's usual custom to drive in the Row before lunch, and also again in the afternoon.

"Mamma is not going this morning," Marian answered. "She has a headache, so I told her that I would come with you for a walk. You like that, don't you, children?"

"Oh, yes!" chorused the little girls. They knew that their sister never refused to treat them to chocolates or caramels if they stopped before a confectioner's window, and were therefore delighted at the rare chance of going out with her.

After the confectioner's had been duly visited they turned into Kensington Gardens.

"We will go to the Ladies' Mile and see the equestrians," Marian said, and greatly to the little girls' pleasure they walked to the fashionable promenade.

Ruth usually, when out with her young charges, took the more retired walks in the gardens, so that Mrs. Varcy should have no fault to find with her—that amiable lady not being above the meanness of cross-questioning her children as to the governess's behaviour and actions when away from her personal superintendence.

They had been sitting under the shade of the trees for some time, watching the horses and their riders, and enjoying the ever changing scene, the bright dresses of the lady pedestrians, and the soft balmy air, when a form appeared, sauntering slowly along that made Ruth's heart flutter with a sensation half fearful, half delightful.

Would he recognise them! or would he pass by without raising his eyes in the direction in which they were seated?

"Look! Ruth! Look! There is Mr. Calthorpe!" Marian exclaimed; and at that moment the gentleman looking up saw them, and hastened forward with outstretched hands and smiling face to greet them.

"This is an unlooked-for pleasure, Miss Varcy," he said, shaking hands first with Ruth and then with Marian. "I did not expect to see you here to-day."

"We do not often come," Marian replied; "that is to say walking; mamma always prefers driving." She did not add that she had come in the hope of seeing Harry Somers, who had informed her that that was his usual morning walk.

"And who are these little ones?" George Calthorpe asked, appealing to Ruth, and indicating the twins, who were staring at him in open-mouthed and open-eyed wonder. "Sisters, I presume!"

He had spoken to Ruth, but it was Marian who answered him.

"I beg your pardon, I should have introduced them before. Yes; these are my twin sisters, Ada and Edith, whose powers in the way of consumption of chocolate are something wonderful to see!" and, indeed, the children's faces and fingers showed that they had not been idle since their sister had purchased the sweetmeats for them.

"I will make a note of that," Mr. Calthorpe said, laughing, "so that I may bring my welcome with me when I come to visit these young ladies."

"You will be sure of a genuine one if you bring a box of sweetmeats in each pocket," Marian returned.

"Do you not think we had better be returning?" Ruth here asked, timidly.

"I suppose we had; it is nearly the children's dinner-hour," Marian said, glancing at her watch.

"May I be allowed the pleasure of escorting you home?" Mr. Calthorpe asked, looking at Ruth, who would have declined, only she was forestalled by Miss Varcy acquiescing, as though it were a matter of course.

They had hardly risen from their chairs when they came face to face with Harry Somers, who, as he eagerly explained to Marian, had been unexpectedly detained, and had only that moment made his way to the park.

Gradually Marian and Harry dropped behind, leaving George to walk at Ruth's side, who felt a strange, half fearful happiness in this near proximity to the man she was unconsciously learning to love in listening to his liquid tones, that seemed to take a deeper meaning when he addressed her.

They were practically alone, for the lovers were some way behind, and the twins were running about in front, gathering daisies or chasing each other.

That was a memorable walk to Ruth, and all too soon was it over, and the door of the Varcy mansion reached.

But this was not the only time that George Calthorpe or Harry Somers met them in the Row and escorted them home.

Marian often insisted on Ruth's coming with her after this, and sometimes it would be one gentleman, sometimes the other whom they met, and occasionally both.

At first, Ruth had remonstrated with Marian about these meetings, for though they were deliciously sweet her nature was too truthful to in any way countenance anything underhand or clandestine. But when Miss Varcy averred that her mother knew that they occasionally met both gentlemen and did not disapprove, she gave herself up to the delight of the hour, and she could not but own to herself that she looked as eagerly to meeting George Calthorpe as Marian did to seeing Harry Somers; and the days when he did not appear seemed to lose their brightness, and were blank and dreary indeed, though the sun might be shining as brilliantly, the birds singing as sweetly, and the flowers blooming as fragrantly as before. The change was in herself, and not in the external day, though she did not know it.

Once or twice she had fancied Mr. Calthorpe had addressed her as 'Miss Varcy,' but of this she was not quite certain, as he usually called her 'Miss Ruth,' and in her happiness she let the matter pass. But the circumstance was recalled by an incident that occurred not long after her acquaintance with that gentleman had ripened into something deeper than mere friendship.

She was to be rudely awakened from the dream of possible happiness along which she had allowed herself to drift without thought of coming misfortune.

CHAPTER IV.

It was quite true that Mrs. Varcy knew of the meetings in the Row; but she fondly imagined that the rich Mr. Calthorpe was attracted by her daughter, and she particularly wished to get him as a son-in-law.

She made not the slightest objection whenever Marian announced her intention of going for a walk with the children and their governess instead of driving in the carriage with herself.

Of Harry Somers she never thought, or if she did, she deemed him a nonentity from whom there was nothing to fear. A man with only eight hundred a year would never dare to raise his eyes to her daughter. So she permitted, without interference, those morning walks which were so portionally sweet to both Marian and Ruth, and had she but known it were so fraught with disappointment and vexation for herself.

Not knowing that George Calthorpe was a wealthy man when he had been introduced to her on the night of the ball, she had paid very little attention to him, or she might have seen how much he had been struck with Ruth Hilton, and so probably saved herself a good deal of mortification and humiliation; but she had not noticed and was hugging herself with the delusive idea that everything was going just as she could have wished.

Like a thunderbolt came the revelation of the truth to her. She had been so certain that ere long she would have the pleasure of counting the wealthy Mr. Calthorpe as her son-in-law.

Once or twice she had graciously invited him in to lunch, and on one of these occasions he asked Mrs. Varcy's permission to arrange a boating picnic.

Of course this was smilingly accorded.

He settled that he would drive them down to Richmond on his dog, then they would hire a boat and come back to a dinner at the Star and Garter, before he drove them home in the cool of the evening.

He expressly stipulated that the twins should be included in this programme; it need hardly be said, much to their satisfaction.

The scheme met with Mrs. Varcy's approval because she thought it was a sign that Mr. Calthorpe meant business, and would very shortly propose for her daughter, and besides this, there would be the glory of appearing on a well-appointed drag before the eyes of her neighbours, and this counted for something with the proud woman, for though she had carriages and horses, yet Mr. Varcy did not keep a drag, and therefore it was gratifying to her pride the idea of appearing on Mr. Calthorpe's.

Both Marian and the little girls were in a state of excitement over the proposed excursion.

The elder girl would have liked to have included Ruth and Harry in the party, but as Mr. Calthorpe had not specified them by name, she knew her mother too well to dream of broaching the subject to her.

Privately, Marian thought that Mr. Calthorpe intended to include Ruth, but she had no opportunity of sounding him on the subject, and Mrs. Varcy so totally ignoring the governess, she knew it would be worse than useless appealing to her.

Events showed that Marian was right in her surmise, and that George Calthorpe had fully intended Miss Hilton should be of the party.

On the appointed day his splendidly-horsed drag drove up to the door, and after the grooms had gone to the horses' heads, he alighted, and entered the house. Mrs. Varcy was ready, bridling with pleasure to play the part of chaperon.

Marian was there, looking very fair and pretty in her white dress and shady hat, and the twins, their eyes sparkling at the anticipated pleasure; but George Calthorpe looked in vain for the one sweet face he only cared to see.

"We are quite ready," Mrs. Varcy said, sweetly, seeing that he waited after he had shaken hands all round.

"But—Miss Ruth!"

"Eh!"

"Miss Ruth."

"What of her?" an ominous frown contracting the lady's eyebrows.

"Are we not to have the pleasure of her company?"

"Certainly not!" very stiffly indeed.

"But, Mrs. Varcy—"

"Really, Mr. Calthorpe, I am astonished at your asking such a thing."

He looked up, surprised at her tone.

"Indeed!" he said. "Why, I made up the party chiefly for her. I thought you understood that. I am sure she would enjoy herself."

"Oh yes, she would," Marian cried, before Mrs. Varcy could speak. "I will go and fetch her."

A sharp "Marian, stop where you are!" from her mother stayed her as she was on the point of leaving the room in search of her friend.

"Mamma, do let me go," she pleaded.

"No, indeed!" Mrs. Varcy said, angrily. "I never heard of such a thing. This is all your fault, Marian, making such a fuss over that girl. You've given her grand, stuck-up ideas; that sort of people should be kept in their places."

"Miss Ruth! Why, what is she?"

"My children's governess. It was very reprehensible of Marian not to have told you. You could have guarded against the creature's machinations then. I am sure I would have told you had I known that you were in ignorance of her social position."

"Your children's governess! I thought she was your daughter!" George Calthorpe said, in genuine astonishment.

"My daughter! My daughter! My daughter!" was all the frate and insulted lady could ejaculate, as though she were annihilated at the very thought of such an unheard of, such a horrible mistake.

"I certainly thought she was your eldest daughter," Mr. Calthorpe returned, calmly, though there was an amused look in his eyes as he surveyed Mrs. Varcy's indignant and apoplectic-looking face.

Forgetting her suavity in her rage, that lady tore violently at the bell, and, on the footman appearing with prompt alacrity, she ordered Miss Hilton to be called down.

She could hardly contain her passion while waiting for the unconscious offender. She would have liked to vent her spleen and disappointment upon George Calthorpe himself, but something in that gentleman's manner and bearing stopped her, and she reserved the whole of her wrath for poor Ruth's shoulders—that bold-faced mix who had upset all her cherished calculations.

"So, Miss Hilton," she began, almost before the girl had entered the room, "what have you to say in extenuation of your conduct?"

"My conduct!"

"Don't repeat my words, miss, like a parrot. I say your conduct—your discreditable conduct."

"I—I do not understand."

"Don't try your innocent airs on with me; they won't pay, though they have taken others in. You—you are a viper, that I lodged and warmed. I took you in charity out of the gutter, and this is how you repay me, by base ingratitude!"

"What have I done?" asked Ruth, raising her large eyes in astonishment to Mrs. Varcy's face, which was the colour of a penny.

"What have you done, you innocent-looking schemer! What have you not done?" screamed the frate woman.

"I do not understand you, Mrs. Varcy!" Ruth said, with quiet dignity.

"Oh! you don't, don't you," she jeered. "You ignore your scandalous conduct in passing yourself off as my daughter."

"Mrs. Varcy, I—"

"You know you did, and it was for the purpose of gaining the affections of a rich man, who would not even have looked at you had he been aware that you were only my paid servant."

"Indeed, Mrs. Varcy, I protest against such

statements," George Calthorpe said, hotly; but there was no stopping the flow of her denunciations against the girl.

"You led my innocent daughter on to make clandestine appointments. You accept valuable presents from gentlemen. Altogether, you are not a fit person to associate with my children, and I request that you will leave my house at once!"

And Mrs. Varcy paused, not from lack of words, but from lack of breath.

Ruth stood stunned under these humiliating accusations, which she felt were wholly undeserved, but which were none the less hard to bear in the presence of the man she had learned to love.

For a moment she was speechless, and then, as Mr. Calthorpe moved over to her side, the same kindly light in his eyes as he gazed at her pale face as before he knew her position, she found courage to say,—

"I had no idea that Mr. Calthorpe did not know my real position in this house."

"I am perfectly certain of that," he said, reassuringly.

"Ah!" sniffed Mrs. Varcy, incredulously.

"And as to leading your daughter to make clandestine appointments," Ruth went on, emboldened by the knowledge that he at least would not misjudge her, "she will bear me out when I say that I only counteracted the walks in the Row after she told me you quite approved of them."

"Yes, it is quite true, and you know it, mamma," began Marian, impetuously, when Ruth said, gently,—

"Let me finish, dear!" Then turning to her mother, "As to your last accusation, Mrs. Varcy, it is totally untrue. I never received a present from a man in my life!"

"Very likely," answered Mrs. Varcy. "Then pray, how did you become possessed of that costly ruby necklace that you wore at the ball? You never got that in a legitimate manner, I'll be bound. Your wages would not buy them!" she added, coarsely.

For the first time during the interview tears started to Ruth's soft eyes.

"Those jewels my poor mother kept for me during all her trials," she answered, quietly.

"They were the only things left of my father's fortune; those jewels that had belonged to the women of successive generations of his family, and which he bequeathed to her in trust for me."

Mrs. Varcy sniffed more vigorously and incredulously than ever. She did not know who her own grandfather was, and this sounded like an impossible assertion of Ruth's.

"You had better pack up at once and go. I am not to be taken in with your plausible tales," she said.

Without a word Ruth turned to leave the room, when a detaining hand was laid upon her arm, and George Calthorpe's low, deep tones fell on her ear.

"Miss Ruth—you will still let me call you that! I cannot tell you how distressed I am at having been the cause of giving you pain."

"You are not in the least to blame, Mr. Calthorpe."

"You forgive me then! and you will not let this unfortunate occurrence put a stop to our friendship!" And in spite of knowing that Mrs. Varcy's envenomed eyes were on them both, he possessed himself of one of her hands, and kissed it with as much respect as though she were a duchess.

"Did you hear my orders, Miss Hilton!" she snarled. "Perhaps you will obey them when you have done philandering."

George Calthorpe cast one withering look of contempt at the vulgar woman as Ruth slowly went out of the room, Ada and Edith clinging to her, crying and declaring that their dear Ruth should not be sent away.

When the trio had disappeared Marian turned indignantly to her mother.

"How could you say such unkind things, mamma, when you know they were not true!" she said.

"How was I to know they were not true!"

Inquired Mrs. Varcy, who was dimly conscious she had not appeared in the most favourable light before the man she had hoped to gain for a son-in-law.

"Why, mamma, you know you never objected when I told you we were going to the Row, and that we often met Mr. Calthorpe and Mr. Somers there," exclaimed Marian, much to her mother's discomfiture.

"That was different!" she said. "How could I tell that the designing mix would not keep her place, but go passing herself off as one of her betters! It all comes of your folly, Marian, in dressing her up, and treating her like your sister."

"She is not designing!" Marian answered, indignantly. "And as for her birth, it is a great deal better than ours. I have heard all about her from the Camelots. I only wish she was my sister!"

"Marian, you forget yourself!" Mrs. Varcy said, loftily sailing from the room without vouchsafing the slightest recognition to Mr. Calthorpe.

Marian turned to him when her mother had gone.

"You must not believe what mamma said about Ruth. She is an angel, if ever there were one on earth. She keeps her mother, and her two little half-brothers entirely, though it was her stepfather who spent all her mother's and her own money. The Camelots told me so," she said, breathlessly.

"I believe Miss Ruth to be everything that is good and noble in woman, and what you say, Miss Varcy, only confirms that impression," he replied, smiling down at the eager little champion of his darling. "Her name, I think your mother said, is Hilton."

"Yes! It was my fault that you did not know it before. I always call her Ruth!"

"Yes! I quite thought you were sisters. You see you were dressed alike the first time I saw you, save that you wore pearls and Miss Hilton had those magnificent rubies round her throat. I think the mistake was excusable, do not you?"

"Quite excusable. Ruth certainly looked more like a countess than a governess; but then her birth is very good indeed."

"Miss Marian, will you give me your friend's address?"

"Most certainly I will!"

"Perhaps the next time I see you, Miss Varcy, I may have something to tell you concerning Ruth and myself," he said, smiling, when he had carefully written down Mrs. Gray's address in his pocket-book.

"I can guess!" laughed Marian, "Ruth will want me for a bridesmaid, and I will come in spite of mamma!"

"Wish me luck in my wooing, Miss Varcy, and I will wish you the same happiness as I hope to enjoy myself ere long," and then seeing Marian's confusion at this home-thrust, he quickly added,

"I am afraid our boating party will not come off to-day after all; but it is only postponed. I still hope to have the pleasure of taking you and your sisters on the proposed excursion; but then Ruth shall welcome you too. Before I go let me thank you for your brave championship of her. As long as I live I shall remember and be grateful to you for it."

And cordially wringing her hand, he strode out of the room and down the steps, where the four boys were impatiently championing their bite, pawing the ground, and giving their grooms enough to do to hold them, having become very restless at their master's unusual delay; and if horses can think at all they must have been rather surprised to find their heads turned homewards without having the spin for which they had prepared themselves.

A morning or two after Ruth was sitting in the tiny parlour of the cheap lodgings to which she had returned.

She was thinking sadly of the unfounded accusations of Mrs. Varcy, and of the effect they must have had upon the man, who, she was obliged to own to herself, she had learned to love.

It was folly, she knew, worse than folly, now

when he must despise her for an adventuress and impostor; but she had drifted into loving him unawares.

Well, this was a dream of the past; she must root it up and turn her attention to trying to earn enough to keep the wolf from the door. She sighed when she thought of what a hard task that would be now.

Mrs. Varcy had not given her any money when she so summarily dismissed her, though there was nearly a quarter's salary due, and the girl wondered dimly how she, her mother and young brothers were to live until she could succeed in getting some employment.

Her sorrowful meditations were interrupted by the little maid-of-all-work belonging to the establishment opening the door, and announcing, "A gentleman ter see yer, miss!" and ushering in, without further ceremony, the very man who was occupying the larger share of her thoughts.

Ruth looked up, and her pale face became suffused with burning blushes as she saw him advancing towards her with an outstretched hand and a look in his eyes which made her heart beat flatteringly.

"Miss Hilton, Ruth, tell me I am not unwelcome—that my presence here does not displease you!"

Ruth murmured something, she scarcely knew what. The memory of Mrs. Varcy's accusations covered her with shame and confusion.

He saw it, and his indignation against that amiable lady did not decrease at the sight of his lover's distress.

"Ruth," he continued, tenderly, "will you forgive me for having been the unlucky cause of bringing down unmerited abuse on your devoted head? My darling, you must have seen that I love you!"

A sudden wave of joy swept over Ruth as she listened to his impassioned words.

Could it be true that he loved her, poor and despised as she was? Was not this some dream from which she would awake to find the stern reality of loveless poverty?

But no; he was there in the flesh pouring out his words fast and eagerly.

"My darling, I have come to ask you to be mine—my own loved wife! Let me shield you always from attack, calumny, and harm! Give me the right to guard you from the whole world!" he said.

She could scarcely believe this great happiness had come to her; yet here he was, pleading earnestly that she would bless him with her love.

He loved her! What more of earthly bliss could this world hold?

But, ah! He did not know. There were her mother and her half-brothers. She could not leave them, and all the new-found gladness died out of her face as she turned to him.

"I am very sorry, but I cannot be your wife," she said, slowly, and with effort.

"But why?" he said. "Is it that I am too old for you? I am nearly double your age, I know; yet I love you, ay, with my heart's best love! Do you know, Ruth, that if you send me from you will make my whole life desolate? Yet—yet I will not persist in my demand if you say you cannot love me. Is that the reason of your refusal? Do you think me presumptuous?"

"Oh! no, no! It is not that!" she sobbed.

"Is there someone else?—someone who has gained that for which I would give my life?"

"No! no!" she repeated.

"Then what obstacle is there to my gaining this little hand?" taking it as he spoke. "Understand me, Ruth, I would not take your hand unless your heart could accompany the gift; but if, as I hope and believe, you are not indifferent to me, why should we part?" he questioned, gravely.

"My mother and brothers," she faltered at last.

"What of them?"

"I—I could not leave them."

"Is that your only reason for refusing me?" he asked, his face lightening.

"I—I—think—so," she murmured, her eyes falling beneath his earnest regard.

"My darling! mine!" he cried in ecstasy,

drawing her towards him, and pressing his lips to her white brow. "That need never part us! Your mother shall be mine, and your brothers also! I will not separate you from those you love!"

"But we are so poor!" she objected, timidly.

"I am not fit to be your wife!"

"You are fit to be an empress, my darling!" he returned, fondly; "and do not talk of being poor. Why, your ruby necklace is a fortune, even if your face were not, which, in my eyes it is—a fortune that a king might envy my possession of!"

"Ah, you flatter me!"

"I do not. Ruth, is it to be 'yes'?"

Ruth blushed, but her tongue refused to answer.

"Say 'yes,' darling. I shall not believe you are my very own unless your lips tell me so. Say the word that will give you to me for aye. Will you be my wife? Answer, darling!"

Soft and tremulous came the words,—

"Yes! I will be yours till death parts us!"

and as he gathered her into his arms her head rested on his breast, and a great content and happiness enveloped her.

"I cannot tell you, my darling, how thankful I am that you are not the daughter of that odious woman!" George Calthorpe said, after an interval of bliss that was too great for words.

"Are you really?" she asked, lifting her great eyes to his.

"Really and truly. I must have been blind, indeed, to have for one instant imagined that you could be any relation of hers! You are as dissimilar from her as day from night!"

"But Marian is her daughter."

"I admit Marian is a clever little girl, and a staunch and faithful friend; but, ugh! the idea of that frightful, vulgar woman as a mother-in-law! How can I thank you enough for having saved me from the fate of being her son-in-law!"

"Yet you say you would have married me all the same had I indeed been her daughter?"

"Yes, Ruth, I would have married you were there fifty Mrs. Varcys to be encountered; but, still, I am thankful for my escape."

"Poor Mr. Somers!"

"Why do you pity him?"

"Because I think before long he will occupy the position you deprecate so much."

"Is it so?"

"Yes, Marian told me herself."

"Well, he is a good fellow, and she deserves to be happy; but I do not envy him the prospect of having such a mother-in-law. Darling, have you forgiven me for the mistake I made in taking you for Mrs. Varcy's daughter?"

"It was not your fault."

"Perhaps not. Please Heaven life shall be fair for you henceforth—fair as I can make it. Crosses may come, but we will surmount them together. Nothing can harm those who love truly; and oh, Ruth, I wonder if you understand the depth and ferrency of my love! Turn your eyes to mine, that I may learn in their liquid depths the truth and constancy of yours."

Ruth obeyed, and, apparently, the answer he read in those soft dark orbs satisfied him, for once more he drew her closely to him, and rained kisses on the fair face nestled so confidently on his breast.

Mrs. Varcy's opinion of her late governess altered considerably when she heard that the wealthy Mr. Calthorpe had actually married her.

As Ruth had a splendid estate in the country, besides a town house that was twice as large as her own, diamonds a great deal more valuable, equipages and horses more numerous, and a retinue of servants double in number, Mrs. Calthorpe became a person of great importance in Mrs. Varcy's eyes.

She would go about to her acquaintances saying, "that sweet Mrs. Calthorpe was so handsome, so fascinating, and so condescending. She was such a very great friend of theirs; she would have the dear girls to stay with her on such long visits," &c.

A statement partly true and partly false.

True, inasmuch that Ruth Calthorpe's friendship with Marian Somers never wavered; and she often invited the little girls, Ada and Edith, to stay with her.

False, because since the day she left Mrs. Varcy's house she had never set foot inside it.

Nor was that time-serving lady ever included in the invitations which were cordially extended to her daughters.

As to George Calthorpe, he never regretted the mistake he made, and which he always declared led to his marrying the sweetest wife in the world!

[THE END.]

AS THROUGH A LOOKING GLASS.

—30—

"SAY yes, love!"

"But, my dear girl—"

"Now, Dick, don't be cross."

He was only a few months married. He was head over ears in love with his wife.

"I am not the least bit cross, darling!" he said, leaning back in his chair, and pulling both her arms down around his neck; "but don't you think forty pounds rather high for something we do not really need?"

"Oh, but we do, Dick!" she insisted, eagerly.

"A person must have a cheval-glass nowadays. And this is a beauty. Bevelled French plate, of course, and all framed in mahogany, the real rose mahogany, you know, and finished with polished brass. Why, Dick, it is a bargain at forty pounds!"

He smiled.

The furnishing of their pretty home had already cost a good deal. It was a handsome three-story house, in one of the most fashionable streets of the West End.

"Mrs. Loftus has one," purred on the entreating voice, "not so handsome as this, though I'm sure it cost more."

She paused, waiting for the effect of that last shot. In her scheming consciousness she was well aware no more effective argument could be presented. For had she not refused Harry Loftus to marry Dick Grafton?

He rose, with a lenient laugh, from the richly appointed breakfast table.

"I suppose you must have your way, you little despot!"

"Oh, you darling!" she cried, rapturously.

And she promptly paid him for his permission by giving him half-a-dozen delighted kisses then and there.

He went into the hall for his overcoat, and came back frigate-encloped and hat in hand.

"I'm pretty positive, Gerlie," he said, "that not a looking-glass in Belgrave will have as sweet a face to reflect as will yours. It certainly ought to feel flattered. All the others would be jealous if they knew."

He was too lately married to have ceased the honeymoon habit of making pretty speeches.

Mrs. Grafton blushed in the prettiest manner imaginable.

"You deserve another kiss for that!" she declared.

She stood on tiptoe to give it to him. Then he fished up the morning paper, thrust it in his pocket, put on his hat, and went out.

Hardly had Dick Grafton left home when his victorious bride rushed upstairs to dress previous to making her coveted purchase.

When she descended to her carriage, quite a vision of fashion and loveliness in her leaf-brown plush and costly furs, she was a very proud woman indeed—proud of her home, her husband, and the beautiful mirror she was going to buy. And when she had ordered it to be sent to her residence, she thought with satisfaction of the pleasure she would take in showing her acquisition to Mrs. Loftus.

As she left a restaurant, after a dainty lunch, whom should she meet but Dick's particular

friend, Ralph Rivers. At least he had been the particular friend of Dick's bachelor days. Now young Mrs. Grafton was very wise in her way. So she gave Mr. Rivers her hand and a gracious smile, and invited him up to dinner the following evening.

He had feared that his comradeship with Dick Grafton must end in the marriage of the latter. So it was with repressed surprise, and expressed gratitude, that he accepted the invitation.

"It's a pity," she said, with a compassionate sigh, as she was whirled along to a matinee, "that poor Mr. Rivers hasn't a nice wife and home like Dick!"

Which reference evidenced the fact that Mrs. Grafton possessed a proper appreciation of her charming self.

The curtains had just risen, when a lady entered the theatre, and was ushered to the seat adjoining that of Mrs. Grafton.

"Why, Gertrude!"

"My dear Rose!"

Though several years older than Gertrude, Rose Carr had been her favourite friend. But it was a long time since they had met. A few weeks before Gertrude's wedding, Rose Carr had received a summons to the bedside of a sick brother in the country, and had only lately returned.

"I was just speaking to an old friend of Dick's," said Mrs. Grafton between the acts. "I'm not sure that you know him. His name is Rivers."

Rose's rather faded face flushed brightly.

"Ralph Rivers!"

"Yes."

"I met him at Cheltenham five years ago," she said, a trifle nervously, Mrs. Grafton imagined.

"A casual acquaintance?"

"Well, no!" Then in a burst of confidence: "We were engaged for three months."

"You were!" interestedly. "What broke it off?"

"Oh, he grew jealous, and—there's the curtain!"

Very little indeed did Mrs. Grafton hear of the last act—diplomatically busy was that bright brain of hers.

"Can't you," she asked Rose, as together they passed out of the theatre, "come over to dinner to-morrow evening?"

"To-morrow! Let me see! Yes, I'll come."

When Mrs. Grafton reached home she found her precious mirror there before her. She was still admiring it when Dick reached home. She called to him over the banisters to come up and see her treasure.

"Isn't it lovely, Dick?"

"Lovely!" he assented.

He was gravely regarding the enthusiastic face in the glass.

"But I mean the mirror."

"I don't!" staunchly and adoringly.

He put his arm round her and they went down together.

When they were alone after dinner she broached her little plot.

"I met Mr. Rivers to-day," she said.

"You did!"

"Yes; and I asked him to come up to dinner to-morrow."

"That was nice of you, love!"

"And at the matinee I met Rose Carr, and I asked her to come also."

"But, darling—"

"Well!"

"They were engaged, once."

She nodded.

"I know it. That was why I asked her."

"But the embarrassment! Neither will—"

"Oh, you stupid boy!" she laughed, "wait and see!"

The following evening, when Mr. Grafton came home, he found his wife's friend seated by the log fire, which it was fashionable that winter to affect.

He had just spoken a courteous welcome, when the door-bell rang. Almost immediately after Mr. Rivers was ushered in.

He was a tall, soldierly, well-preserved man, grey-haired and handsome. He started at sight of the figure by the fireplace. Then he went forward. Dick met him, and said,—

"Awfully glad to see you, Ralph. Miss Carr I believe you know."

With quickened heart-throbs, Ralph Rivers faced the music. He was tremendously glad to meet Rose Carr again.

Dinner was announced. To banish the restraint each dreaded the conversation was kept up with persistent gaiety. Suddenly occurred a startling interruption:

Bang!

Fiercely, sharply outrang the report of a revolver. All sprang to their feet. Blankly, with blanched faces they looked around. Dick Grafton started for the door.

"Oh, don't!" wildly entreated his wife. "You will be killed, dear! Don't go!"

At that very moment a second shot was heard.

Grafton dashed out and up the stairs, his wife following him; and down dropped Rose Carr in a dead faint. When she revived she found herself seated in the host's chair, and Ralph Rivers bending solicitously over her. He was gently bathing her forehead with water from the carafe.

"Are you better, Rose?"

"Yes, thank you, Ralph;" her colour coming back with a rush.

"I was all wrong a few years ago, Rose."

"I was too hasty, Ralph."

"But I've loved you ever since, Rose."

"And I've refused two offers for your sake, Ralph."

"You angel!"

When they finally decided to go upstairs and discover the cause of the commotion, they found Mr. and Mrs. Grafton rustling regarding the ruins of their mirror, which was fractured from side to side.

"An attempted burglary," explained Grafton, indicating a half open satchel near the window. "The fellow had got his bag filled with jewellery, silver, toilet articles, and whatever he could pick up, when he observed his reflection in the mirror, and thinking probably that he was detected, fired at his supposed enemy the shots we heard."

"See!" cried Gertrude, half hysterically, "here are the marks of his feet on the window ledge! He must have got out that way—slid down the porch pillar and escaped. My poor, dear, lovely cheval-glass!"

"Well," cried Grafton, with a laugh, "let us be glad he did not get away with his plunder!"

Late they sat discussing the affair, and when they finally broke up it was Ralph Rivers who saw Miss Carr home.

"Dick," ecstatically confided young Mrs. Grafton to her husband the following night, "Rose has been here, and she and Ralph are going to be married! And it's all on account of my mirror!"

"How's that, dear?"

"Why, if I hadn't bought it the burglar couldn't have shot at it. And if he hadn't shot at it we wouldn't have run upstairs. And if we hadn't run upstairs they wouldn't have had an opportunity to make it up."

Dick laughed out in hearty amusement.

"I really believe I was inspired to buy it," avowed Gertrude, solemnly.

"Yes, darling!" meekly assented Dick.

But he groaned, remembering the cheque he had drawn to pay for it.

"Besides," she cried, convincingly, "if the mirror had not been there you'd have been killed, for that awful man was trying to shoot you."

To this remarkable argument Dick returned the only reply a woman's logic should ever receive—a kiss.

THE practice of the wife's assuming the husband's name at marriage is a Roman custom. Julia married to Pompey became Julia of Pompey. In latter times married women signed their names in the same manner, but omitted the "of." In Iceland the opposite has been the custom. There the husband assumes the wife's name.

THE Chinese look upon all suicides with honour, except when the suicide is from trouble caused by gambling. Frequently, if a Chinaman insults another, the quarrel is followed by the suicide of the insulted man, who thinks he has cast ignominy on his aggressor by taking his own life.

WOMEN who clamour for their rights should go to Besjakovschichins, in Russia, probably the only place in the world that is run entirely by women. This State is made up of seven villages, each presided over by a mayoress, the whole under the superintendence of a lady named Sashka, who acts as president. There are women magistrates, women preachers, women policemen—in fact, every capacity in the State is filled by women. The roads are made by women, and women sell milk and deliver letters. If you want to bring an action against your neighbour in this State, you go to a woman lawyer; and if there is anything in your house to be stolen, then a burglar of the weaker sex steals it. No place of any importance is filled by a man.

THERE is said to be no equal in the world to the grand and imposing square known as the Place de la Concorde, in Paris. On one side of it is the Tuilleries, on the opposite side the Champs Elysees, and on the third the River Seine. In the centre stands the obelisk of Luxor, a magnificent monolith of red Egyptian granite, seventy-four feet high and weighing five hundred thousand pounds. This obelisk was one of two of the same shape and size, erected in 1350 B.C., by Ramesses the Great, at the entrance of the Temple of Thebes. Mohammed Ali, Pasha of Egypt, presented it to the French Government, and in 1836 it was removed to its present position in the Place de la Concorde. The removal and erection on the new site required an outlay of eighty thousand pounds, the obelisk being transported to France in a vessel built especially for the purpose. The Place de la Concorde is rich in historic interest. It was there that the guillotine was erected in the "reign of terror," after the death of Louis XVI., and it was there that the signal was given for the attack on the Bastille in 1789. Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were beheaded there in 1793, and it was the scene of great rejoicing in 1848, when France was proclaimed a republic. The Place de la Concorde has also been termed the Place Louis XV, and Place de la Revolution.

HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO BLINDLY

CHAPTER XVI.

FLORA TREAVANION went home that day with a new light in her eyes. As to the way of the world she was as innocent as a child, and she really imagined that, instead of a friend who might degenerate into that troublesome thing called a lover, she had won a second brother. How delightful it would be to go to him for advice when she was in trouble about Eustace, or when she had some little difficulty to prey on her mind which she did not want to confide to the Willoughbys!

How charming to think that there was one who would always stand by her, to whose opinion most people would be ready to bow, who had been out in the world from his youth, and gained the experience which she knew was always wanting to her sheltered girlhood! She kept Sir Basil's proposition to herself, as she did most things in which she was truly interested, unless Eustace was at home, but Emily and Jenny noticed the happy expression on her face, and wondered jealously as to what had brought it there.

Their curiosity increased as she went singing about the house like a lark; and when she disappeared into their father's study they would have given anything to know what she was telling him. Emily was sure that she had met Sir Basil, Jenny was certain that "the sly little mix" had walked all the way to the Rectory and back with Frank Rivers, but neither liked to lower her dignity by asking, so they could only keep their

ears wide open, and hope that something would be let out.

When a letter was brought in after dinner to Mrs. Willoughby, they guessed at once that it came from the Abbey, and looked at Flora to see if she had anything to do with it. But Mr. Willoughby was telling her of an interesting trial in the paper, to which her whole attention was given, and she was quite unconscious of the side glances cast on her from the twins' anxious eyes, till a cry of "how delightful," made her look round.

"Fancy a picnic on the hills this day after to-morrow; won't it be charming!" cried Emily.

"Of course she knew all about it," said Jenny. "I saw there was something 'up' directly she came in."

"Indeed, I didn't! Who gives it? And are we all asked?" lifting her dainty head, and looking round.

"The note is from Sir Basil Fane," said Mrs. Willoughby, gravely, not knowing whether to be pleased or the reverse. "He wants you all to meet on Crowfoot Hill at half-past twelve on Thursday."

"I wonder—do you think it possible," her face lighting up, "do you think there is the smallest chance of his taking Eastace with him?"

"He means to," with a downward glance at the letter; "in fact, he says that the landau will call for you, with Eastace and Mrs. Philip Fane inside."

She sprang from her seat, her eyes shining with joy.

"Oh, I only hope and trust it won't rain. What do you think? It was a good sun-set, wasn't it?" looking out anxiously at the sky, where the evening star was beginning to shine.

"You silly child!" exclaimed Mr. Willoughby, as he watched her with an indignant smile; "as if the weather to-night would make any difference to the weather two days hence. We might have a snowstorm or a hurricane in the interval, or be deluged with rain, or burnt dry by a stroke. You had better not take the mare out to-morrow if she has got to go so far the next day," turning to his wife.

"She won't be wanted. Mrs. Philip chaperones the party, and the girls are to go in the brake, driven by Sir Basil himself," with an accent of pride as if to show how conscious she was that the baronet meant to take especial care of the twins.

The fact is that he had cogitated long over the arrangements for the expedition, and decided that the best way to secure Flora Trevanion's presence was to place her under his aunt's wing, and keep himself in the background. He would have to deny himself the privilege of either seeing or hearing her all the way there; but when once there, who could tell what would happen? With only one chaperone amongst the party, she would be so fully occupied in trying to look after everybody, that she would end by leaving everyone to follow his or her inclinations. He smiled to himself as he thought that he was just as anxious as any youngster to keep the chaperones out of the way; and yet he had no mischievous designs in his head, no crafty plans such as a subaltern in one of the fastest regiments might have conceived for the better manufacture of becoming blushes. He was cunning enough to provide occupation for the two sisters by giving one her usual admirer, Edgar Winder, the other an old friend, Edward Johnson, the son of a neighbour, who was supposed to have a fancy for fuzzy-pated Jenny.

There was one who would never have gained an invitation if it had depended on Sir Basil's own wishes; but the baronet was wise enough in his generation to know that at his first start in the county it would be the reverse of prudent to offend Lord and Lady Rivers. So Frank was invited to join the party on the hill, and came prepared to worry his host as much as it was possible for a guest to do so without being quite a Geth.

The day was all that could be desired, and Flora, looking out of a window in the early

morning with a critical eye, decided that really there was nothing to complain of. The few clouds on the horizon looked perfectly innocent, like pieces of cotton wool in which golden sunbeams were hiding.

The brake arrived first, with Sir Basil on the box, Alice and Edgar Winder, a Miss Chazy Johnson, and a number of young men inside. They all got out, the strangers being introduced, whilst the others shook hands. Mr. Philip Fane made his way straight to the spot where Flora was standing a little apart, and holding out his hand said,—

"Is it peace?"

"Yes, I'm at peace with everybody to-day," with a happy smile, shaking hands readily.

"But will you be to-night? One word of warning, Miss Trevanion," lowering his voice, "it is meant well, so don't take it amiss. Amuse yourself with anyone and everyone, but not with a man if he's ten or twelve years older than yourself. What will seem a joke to you will be grim earnest to him, and you may find yourself in a hole before you know it."

He was gone before she could answer him, or ask him what he meant, and the cause of his quick retreat she found was that Sir Basil had given up the reins to the groom, and was coming towards her. He did not look best pleased when she first caught sight of him, but he smiled and said,—

"Philip been giving you some good advice? All I ask of you is not to take it."

"I haven't the slightest intention," looking up into his face with her eager eyes. "What a lovely day! Is Eastace coming soon?"

"Yes, he will be here directly. Remember, to-day you are to please yourself exactly."

"And no one else!" with a mischievous glance.

"Yes, in pleasing yourself you will please your eldest brother. This is your picnic, given simply and entirely for you, and I insist upon your enjoying yourself to the utmost of your powers."

"I promise to do that. I haven't put on my best dress on purpose," looking down at her simple white cambric, trimmed with the finest work. "I was determined not to have a care on my mind."

"I shouldn't have thought you were the sort of girl to let clothes weigh on your mind," smiling at her frankness, which he felt was the outcome of his own craft. Never before had she spoken to him without overpowering blushes, and a shyness that almost tied her tongue.

"The want of them might. If my best dress had been spoilt I shouldn't have been able to go to another party."

"We should all have had to subscribe to get a new one." Then he took off his hat and got on to the box, pleading Mrs. Willoughby by calling out, "I will take the greatest care of your daughters, and my aunt will make Miss Trevanion her special charge."

Then, as Philip Fane smiledardonically, and Edgar Winder picked up a rose-bud which Emily had dropped upon his knee, the brake drove off in a cloud of dust to a chorus of happy voices already engaged in the buzz of conversation. As soon as they were out of hearing, the landau, with a beautiful pair of chestnuts, drew up outside the gate, and Flora was put into it by her guardian, who felt that he was committing a precious charge indeed to Mrs. Fane's care.

"She won't get into any mischief, I can promise you that, Mrs. Fane," he said, with a kindly smile; "but you will see that she comes to no harm, won't you?"

"That I will, Mr. Willoughby," with a gracious bow.

"I'm here," cried Eastace, in an offended tone. "You quite forget that she has a brother."

"She won't, anyhow. Good-morning; a most successful day to you all."

"Oh, dear! I wish you were coming, too," cried Flora, impulsively, as she squeezed his hand, and looked with loving eyes into his pleasant face.

"Shouldn't I be in the way!" as he stopped

back, rather ashamed to think how much he should have liked it himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRANK RIVERS was not in the best temper possible that very fine day in June. In a subtle manner that he could not prevent, he found himself ousted from his post by Flora Trevanion's side. If the Baronet himself didn't take possession of her, his smoothed-tongued cousin got in the way, and all the while she looked supremely content, as if she did not miss him in the least. And why? Simply because—that brother of hers, to whom she was so absurdly devoted, had been brought up the hill in his own chair drawn by a pony, and had been lying on a heap of cushions on the grass, drawing caricatures of the company in general, the centre of a laughing group!

Would she ever care for anyone but him? he wondered jealously, and then his better nature prevailed; and he told himself that he was a brute to grudge the poor fellow any mite of happiness that came in his way. What would become of him if he were deprived of the use of his own long legs, and condemned to be as useless as a dead log. There was his own sister Nesta, bending her golden head over the paper which Eastace had just given her with intense interest, as if it were a work of art, drawn by a Royal Academician. Pity had drawn the simple-hearted girl to his side, and there she seemed content to remain. Flora finding her brother could do very well without her rose softly to her feet, and looked round to see what everybody was doing. Luncheon was over, with all its fun and nonsense, and the company was gradually breaking up in twos, and scattering in every direction. "Every laddie had his law," and flirting was, I grieve to say, the general order of the day.

Emily, who had talked so properly in her own room at home, slunk round the corner with her special friend in attendance, a striking instance of the weakness of human nature, and Jenny did much the same, showing the force of a bad example. Mr. Philip Fane frowned about, sometimes interfering with Eastace and Miss Rivers, sometimes amusing himself with Jenny, out of whom he contrived to squeeze every particle of information which she possessed concerning the Trevanions, but never losing sight of Flora, whatever he was doing, and whoever was his companion. He smiled as he saw her stand up and presently stroll away with Sir Basil on one side and Rivers on the other, telling himself that he need not mind, as a three-cornered flirtation never did anybody the slightest harm.

"Everyone is flirting," said Sir Basil, looking down into her eyes with an expression which seemed to confirm his words; but he went on "except you and I, and we are far above it."

"No man is above it until he's safe over sixty," said Rivers gruffly; "and even then, if he has a set of false teeth and a wig, he'll often start again."

"But I never went in for that sort of thing when a youngster," with imperturbable gravity.

"You talk as if you were sixty already," said Flora, with a low sweet laugh.

"Rather more like half, but I feel like the whole. Fancy you eighteen, and I thirty, twelve long years between us!"

"Confound the fellow!" fumed Rivers in a suppressed passion. "What business has he to know her age, or to talk as if there were any connection between the two?" Aloud he remarked triumphantly, "And I am nineteen, so we are as close together as can be."

"Ah! then I have the advantage over you," said Sir Basil quietly. "You must be labelled 'dangerous' and kept at a distance, whilst I have all the privileges granted to 'the safe.'"

"I kept at a distance, when I'm one of the oldest friends Miss Trevanion has!" his face flushing.

"Who was talking of Miss Trevanion?" calmly regarding his rival's red cheeks.

"You were!"

"Excuse me, I was generalising. To all young ladies you are dangerous, and I am safe, and old friendship has nothing to do with it really. Can't some men go further in three weeks than others in three years?"

Three weeks! Wasn't that the exact time that elapsed between Flora's first meeting with Fane and the day of the fête, when they had their long *tête-à-tête*? What did he mean by casting it in his teeth!

"Yes," he said, between his teeth, "but the nicest girls don't go with them."

"I would not put myself in a rage about a spiteful female," said Flora mischievously, looking up at him from under her long lashes. "Nobody has gone anywhere that I know of. Here in the parish of Greylands we are all standing still."

"Not a bit of it," fiercely. "Somebody whom you know very well," alluding to Emily Willoughby, "is she where she was a week ago?"

"Oh yes," with an amused laugh. "She has been exactly in the same position for the last two years. Sir Basil, have you ever had any sisters! Have you ever watched their love affairs dragging on from week to week, without wishing to give them a helping push?"

He turned hastily away, and wrenched a bunch of purple heather from the rock, ruthlessly, by its roots.

"Love affairs don't amuse me," he said, hoarsely, and Rivers catching sight of his face saw that it was ghastly.

The laughing retort on his lips died away in presence of a mystery which he could not fathom, and for awhile the ill-assorted trio walked on in silence.

Flora, struck by the harshness of Sir Basil's tone, came to the conclusion that his sister, if she had ever existed, was dead, and thought she had unwittingly touched on a past sorrow, and felt uncomfortable.

They walked on till they came to the banks of a small lake, set like a diamond in an emerald frame, with graceful larches and willows fringing its banks. On the lake, moored to the side amongst tall rushes, were three boats, which Sir Basil had caused to be conveyed there earlier in the day.

Emily and Mr. Winder had already found their way into one, and her admirer was holding forth to her on the beauties of nature in doleful tones; another couple had possessed themselves of the second, and were idly floating over the calm waters at the will of every current, far too occupied with each other to think of such a small matter as taking up the oars.

The third was empty, and looked inviting. "You are fond of the water?" asked Sir Basil, looking thoughtfully down at the little cockleshell, as if he had not yet made up his mind as to what he should do.

"Very," said Flora, delightedly.

"Don't you remember when I rowed you on the lake at home," said Rivers, eagerly; "and the moon came out, and it was awfully jolly!"

"Let us see if we can't be awfully jolly in the sun," said Sir Basil stretched out his hand to help her in.

"You can row us if you like, Rivers; and we'll try to feel romantic if we can."

Frank grunted like an angry pig, and was about to blurt out a fierce refusal; but at a pleading glance from Flora's soft brown eyes he stepped into the boat, although still looking rather sulky. Sir Basil was about to follow when he caught sight of a pale face with a pair of cruel black eyes peering at him through the leaves of a bramble-bush, behind which the man himself was hiding.

"Go on without me," he said, without a moment's hesitation; and as Frank pushed the boat off with alacrity, delighted at having his prizes to himself, he walked with long strides across the heather to where he had seen the man's face appear.

"What are you doing there, you scoundrel!" he said, in a voice of suppressed passion, as he grasped his cane threateningly.

"Who was it, did you see?" asked Frank, curiously.

"No; at least, I'm not sure," with a puzzled

look on her face; "it was nobody belonging about here, and yet I've seen him before."

"Sir Basil was in a thundering wax; but thanks be to the vagabond for helping us to give him the slip! Now we can enjoy ourselves at last."

"I've enjoyed myself all the while," her eyes wandering to the bank, where she could catch a glimpse of the baronet, half hidden by a willow. Evidently he was in a rage, for she could see him raise his right arm as if about to strike, and she wondered what it could be to incense him to such an unusual degree.

"But you are glad to get rid of him, aren't you?" leaning forward on his oars, his blue eyes full of fun and eagerness.

"Not a bit. I wish you liked him as much as I do," an audacious wish that nearly took his breath away.

"Look here, I'll love him like a brother if you'll only promise to hate him," with great earnestness.

"Hate him!" her eyes opening wide with genuine horror, a little catch in her breath, as if the bare idea nearly choked her. "Hate the man who saved Eustace! I should deserve to be scouted by all my friends."

"It isn't fair to talk as if he were the one man who had ever done such a thing," his eyes angry and sullen. "Don't you suppose that I, or any other fellow, would have done the same?"

"You would, because you know us, and we've always been good friends."

"But we shan't be good friends, or any friends at all if you stick this fellow before me."

"I'm not going to give him up," setting her pretty lips resolutely.

"Not if I tell you you must choose between us!" his voice low and husky, the veins on his forehead swelling.

Her cheeks grew white, and a frightened look came in her eyes; but she stuck to the absent loyalty—to the man who had saved her brother's life. "No, I'll never give him up!" she said, softly, and Frank turned his face away, and said no more.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"You shall be precious sorry for this," growled James Carter, formerly valet to Sir Lucius Fane, subsequently billiard-marker, tout, blackleg, in fact, a graduate of all those professions which profit by the faults and the follies of their fellows—as he pulled himself together, after the soundest thrashing he had ever had in his life, and went away limping and cursing as he went.

"Come here a second time, and I'll lodge you in gaol," shouted Sir Basil, white with rage, as he flung his broken stick after the retreating figure. Then drawing a long breath he picked up his brown pot-hat which had fallen off in the struggle, settled his coat in its place, and began to calm down.

Philip Fane was standing at his elbow before he was aware of it, with a smile on his thin lips, but his keen eyes watchful and eager. "Anything up?"

"Yes," speaking sternly, whilst his eyes flashed. "If it is you who have brought that scoundrel down here, I beg you'll send him back at once."

"There are a good many scoundrels in the world. You don't mean me, I suppose!"

"I don't; but if you choose to encourage men like Carter, I shall ask you to give the Abbey a wide berth."

"You are polite, but I needn't keep away on Carter's account," flicking off the head of a thistle. "I'm of no interest to him because there's nothing to be got out of me."

"No more there is from me."

"He clearly thinks there is, or he wouldn't stay. I don't suspect him of disinterested attachment."

"You know what he did!" turning his face away, and speaking almost under his breath.

"Cheated the late lamented out of a post-office order, didn't he?"

"Yes, and swore till he was black in the face that he had nothing to do with it."

"You never liked him because—" even Philip Fane stopped, held back by a scruple.

"If I wrung his neck like a rat there would be no sir," fiercely, between his set teeth.

"I am afraid the law would reward you with the gallows," said the other, coolly.

"What were you doing with him in Ryelane?" turning round upon him quickly, and looking straight into his thin, impassive face.

"Don't you think I've more right to ask what you were doing with the fair Flora?" a slight sneer parting his lips.

"Not at all. She was taking a drive with her brother. I was only an adjunct."

"I was taking a stroll, after an hour's fishing, and Carter was only an adjunct," he rejoined, imperturbably.

"You went there on purpose to meet him?"

"You went out for a drive on purpose to take Miss Trevanion. She was necessary to your happiness, but Carter wasn't to mine."

"Then why do you have anything to do with him?" passing over the first assertion though it had dyed his cheeks with an angry flush.

"He is interesting to me as a study of human nature. Every time I meet him he is on a lower level than he was before, and I watch him sink, till I wonder what lower depths a man can reach."

"You expect me to believe that you made an appointment with him simply in order to analyse his character?" scorn in the tone of his voice, and the flash of his eye.

"Not quite that. I've lived long enough to find out that a man's vices, whilst they make him useless to himself, often render him useful to his neighbours."

"I would as soon touch a decayed dog!"

"You are a fine gentleman; you always were. I'm a pauper, and I haven't a prejudice belonging to me."

"A man without prejudices is generally synonymous with a vaurien without a conscience."

"I am a vaurien," his eyes lighting up with a peculiar smile, "with a position no higher than a toadstool; therefore, when I marry, I shall marry the girl I like best, whilst you look out for a grandee, with the stiffest backbone in the county."

"I shan't marry a backbone or anything else," quickly.

"By Jove! I am glad to hear it! I thought you were spoons on Miss Trevanion."

Sir Basil's eyes flashed.

"Let her alone. She has nothing to do with you."

"That remains to be seen. If the mortgages are paid off Trevanion Hall will be a fine property, and the girl will be sole heiress when the cripple has slipped the hooks."

"What a cold-blooded hound you are!" his nostrils quivering with suppressed passion. "Some day Eustace Trevanion will be more of a man than you are yourself. Once cure this disease of the hip, and there is nothing against his being a Methuselah."

"Now's the time for a cure, and a cure costs money—and they haven't got a penny!" looking up at his cousin from the corners of his eyes.

"If it costs a million, that boy shall be cured! If there's a doctor in the world who can do it!" with fixed determination.

"The money to come out of your own pocket!" a scowl gathering on his pale face.

Sir Basil hesitated. If he chose to lay the boy under such an obligation, his cousin was the last person he meant to take into his confidence.

"I think either of them would be disposed to put the Hall into the market rather than lose a chance."

"And, when there, you would buy it; play the magnanimous dodge, and propose to the elder. She would marry you, as the only way of saying 'thank you,' and break her heart for young Rivers!"

"Curse you! what trash you talk!" exclaimed Sir Basil, in a tone of the greatest exasperation.



THEY SAW THE BARGHET RAISE HIS ARM AS IF ABOUT TO STRIKE.

I never shall marry. How many times do you want to be told?"

"As often as you like; the words have a pleasant sound. If I could only bring myself to believe them!"

"There's the band," as the sound of music came from behind the hill, on the side of which they were standing; "go and make a fool of one of the girls after your usual fashion."

"Won't you come, and make a fool of yourself?"

"Not yet—presently. I want to see if that brute has really taken himself off."

"All right. Don't blame me if I make hay whilst the sun shines," and he walked off, humming a tune from the latest opera, a slim, active figure, with the grace and agility of a panther, and no small portion of its hidden strength.

Sir Basil waited till the sound of his footsteps was lost in the lapping of the quiet water at his feet, and then threw himself down, face foremost, on the grass in an attitude of abject misery. What was wealth and position to him with this gnawing agony in his heart! The sight of that man, who was scarcely higher or less grovelling than a reptile, had brought back the past with its crushing weight, till his proud spirit bowed down beneath its burden.

It was a burden known only to himself, not to be breathed even in the silence of the night lest even a bird of the air might hear it, and carry ruin on his innocent tongue. It was with him night and day, only sometimes he thought of it less when talking to the girl he loved.

The sound of her voice was like David's harp to Saul. The devil was exorcised by its sweetness, but only for a while, and only to come back with its bitterness and blackness redoubled.

Flora Trevanion had shown him what his life might be—a glorified path of happiness—blessed by the poor for the good that was done them, blessed by the rich for the pleasure he brought with him.

And James Carter had reminded him of what his life must be—a lonely road up a steep ascent, with no kind eye to watch him, no tender hand to help, no footsteps to hear him company.

He hid his face deeper in the grass, as if he would hide from Heaven itself; he tore the blades with his teeth like a dying animal in its death-throes, and writhed with the pain that can find no anodyne.

He was a leper in his own eyes—a man whom his fellow-men would shun like that fatal curse, and to let a stainless girl touch his hand was sacrilege—nothing short of sacrilege!

The sky was no longer cloudless. Those innocent bits of cotton-wool had unfolded themselves and spread over the face of the heavens till all the blue was hidden and changed into a murky grey; whilst the storm within was raging in its fury he was blind to the storm without.

Those clouds would pass away, but the cloud on heart and brain would always be there to hide him from sunshine and laughter and joy, and in his misery he groaned aloud.

"Sir Basil!" said a voice which sent an electric thrill through every nerve.

It was only a frightened whisper, but it roused him with its usual charm.

He raised his head and passed his hand across his eyes as if half dazed.

Flora was standing there, her eyes fixed upon him in wonder and sympathy, her hand holding a yellow placard.

"You, too!" he said, as if in bitterest reproach.

"Are you ill! You frighten me!" her lips trembled.

"Who gave you that thing!" his eyes fixed on the glaring sheet of paper.

"A man whom I met over there. He told me to keep it, and said some nonsense about the thousand pounds and a marriage-portion. I thought he was mad."

Without taking any apparent notice of what she said, he stood up and snatched the paper

from her hand, tearing it into countless shreds, whilst his chest heaved with pent-up passion.

She looked up at him, her heart torn with pity, because she saw the misery and wretchedness in his face.

Very timidly she held out one small hand.

He shrank from it as if its touch would hurt him.

"Flora," he began, hoarsely, and then stopped, as if the words he wanted to utter choked him. A quiver of pain passed over his face, but with a violent effort of will he compelled himself to go on. "You must hate me—that is the only chance for you or me. Hate me, my darling!" brokenly. "For Heaven's sake, hate me!"

Then he turned and left her standing there, her eyes wide open, her lips white as death, her breast heaving with wonder and pain!

(To be continued.)

THE Persians in 516 A.C. invented a transparent glass varnish which they laid over sculptured rocks to preserve them from bad weather. This coating has lasted to our day, while the rocks beneath are honeycombed.

It has been discovered that the human voice is produced by forty-four different muscles. Fourteen of these serve for the emission of 16,380 sounds, and the others aid the production of some 175,000,000 different sounds—that is, these forty-four muscles go to produce millions of different tones.

A REGULAR slave-mart still exists in many country districts of Finland. Once a year such paupers, lunatics, and aged people of each parish as cannot support themselves are put up at public auction, and consigned to those families or farmers who will board them at the lowest price offered by the parish authorities. The helpless creatures are made to work as much as possible by their owners, who have the right to chastise them.



SIR JOHN STARTED AS HE OBSERVED A WHITE FIGURE BY THE TOMB-STONE.

CAN YOU BLAME HER?

CHAPTER XI.

THEY met again as strangers.

Sir John never raised his eyes to the beautiful vision presented to his notice; he offered her his arm, and they went downstairs to dinner. Only when they had taken their places did he really look at his companion; then for one moment he grew strangely pale. The hand that was toying with the menu trembled like a woman's.

"I beg your pardon," he said, in the voice she knew so well, and these were the first words he addressed to her, "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Stuart, but you bear a striking resemblance to someone I knew well. For the moment it almost overcame me."

"I am sorry," she said, gently. "Resemblances are strange things, Sir John."

"Very," and he looked at her intently. "I cannot say in what this consists—hair, colouring, and expressive eyes. You will forgive my frankness? I was so struck by it I almost fancied myself dreaming, and that the grave had given up its dead."

His companion sighed.

"Many people wish that it could."

"Do you?"

"I think not. There is so much pain in life, so many hours of disappointment and weariness. I think we ought to be glad the dear ones are safe for ever from all such sadnesses."

"I have often wished to meet you," said Sir John, with the courteous manner he always used to women. "From the moment when I heard my old friend had left a widow I resolved if ever I returned to England to go to Allerton and claim acquaintance with her for Maxwell's sake."

"You knew him well?"

"I believe I was the most intimate friend he had, but I was abroad the last months he spent

in England, and had absolutely no idea he had left a wife to mourn his death."

"Lord Allerton himself ignored it," returned Hyacinth, calmly. "Until last November we had never met."

"And now he loves you as his own child!"

"Yes; I don't think I could be dearer to him if I were really his own daughter," and the tears came welling up into her beautiful eyes.

"I have made you cry in the first hour of our introduction," said Sir John, penitently.

"Can you ever forgive me, Mrs. Stuart?"

"You did not mean to pain me."

"Indeed, no; but I have been travelling beyond the bounds of civilisation, until I think I have forgotten the common politeness of society."

"Have you been abroad long?"

"Over a year."

Hyacinth studied her plate.

"I almost wonder anyone could stay away from England so long; but no doubt you had a strong inducement."

"I wanted to be away from everyone who had ever known me. I wanted forgetfulness. Excepting Carnegie I don't suppose I met a human creature who had ever heard my name. I was, as it were, dead to all who knew me."

"And you think it right?"

"It was not brave," he confessed, "but I can hardly call it wrong. You differ from me," seeing that she was silent.

"I think," said Hyacinth, slowly, "that everyone in this world has their work to do, that the comfort and well-being of others depends to a degree upon them; and with your wealth and responsibilities it seems to me there must have been many who needed you in England."

"Perhaps; but England had grown hateful to me. I longed for change and novelty."

"And were you happy?"

He smiled, but there was more of sadness than gaiety in his expression.

"I don't believe in that word, Mrs. Stuart. No one in this world save children and fools are really happy."

"I think you are mistaken."

"I hope I am; but you who have known such bitter sorrow, who were left, they tell me, a widow so soon after your wedding, surely you cannot be a believer in happiness!"

"I think I am. I have known heavy trouble, Sir John, but I am not unhappy."

"Not now," and he looked with a meaning smile to where the Duke sat in attendance on some stately dowager. "I understand that Carnegie is a fortunate man, and has succeeded in making you forget the past."

She shook her head.

"I shall never forget the past."

"But you will let me congratulate you——"

She interrupted him.

"Indeed, Sir John, there is no cause. I am Maxwell Stuart's widow. Do not think of me by any other title."

The Duchess gave the signal for the ladies to retire.

Sir John held open the door for them. Then he drew his chair next the Earl of Allerton's.

"I hope you have not forgotten me, my lord!"

"I never forget old friends. Ah, Sir John, we have both known bitter trouble since we met."

"Don't call me Sir John," pleaded the Baronet. "I was always Jack to you in the old days."

"And it is only four years since we were all at the Towers! Who would think it!"

"The time has not changed you, Lord Allerton. I expect I am most altered. I know I feel quite aged since then."

"You look ten years older, but who can wonder with sorrow such as yours! I suppose you mean to settle down now?"

"I don't know."

"You mustn't go roving about the world like a prodigal son. There is too much depending upon you for that. Take up your position as one of the richest commoners in England. Go into

Parliament, make yourself heard of. With your wealth a splendid career lies before you."

"I don't think I shall go abroad," said Sir John, slowly, "but I don't feel inclined to go into Parliament. Nature meant me for a simple country gentleman."

"Then be what Nature meant you to be. Settle down at The Elms, build model cottages, and rear prize cattle. It will be better than roaming over the world like a wandering Jew."

Sir John shuddered.

"I could never make a home of The Elms."

"Why not?"

"For me the place is haunted."

"Nonsense!"

"I mean it, Lord Allerton. The memory of my wife and child haunts the home where I lost them."

"Then take another wife."

Sir John looked troubled.

"I suppose some day it will come to that, but not yet—not while my darling haunts my dreams—while I see her before me and hear her voice a dozen times a day. Some day I suppose I shall have to marry, as so many men do for the sake of an heir, but ten years hence will do for that, when my wife's image is not so fresh in my memory, and I do not see her form in my dreams."

"It was a terrible bereavement, but, of course, it was a relief that the child was taken."

"Relief!" quite forgetting how he had once told Hyacinth he thanked Heaven Nan was dead, since she was spared from growing up like her mother. "What can you mean?"

"She might have inherited her mother's madness."

"You are labouring under some extraordinary mistake!" cried Sir John.

"I thought it was generally known your wife died insane—that the last months of her life were spent in an asylum?"

The baronet sprang up in indignation.

"You have been grossly deceived, Lord Allerton. I assure you on my honour there is no foundation for such a report. My wife died of decline."

The old noble offered his apologies with ready tact, and Sir John accepted them as freely.

"You must come and see us in Eaton-square to convince me you have forgiven my blunder. I should like you to see Maxwell's boy. He's a splendid fellow. The image of his father!"

"How old is he?"

"Nearly three. I'm as proud of him as if he were my grandson."

"His mother must have married very young. She looks quite a girl now."

"She was barely eighteen. Fancy, wife, widow, mother, within the year."

"She seems to have got over it."

The Earl shook his head.

"She doesn't go about in a crape dress and black bonnet. She doesn't utter long rhapsodies about her grief and loneliness. She receives my guests cheerfully when they come to see me, and goes into society to please me, but for all that, Sir John, the grief's there. I have seen her time after time with the tear-stains on her face. Since she was presented some of the noblest names in England have been offered her, and she will not even listen to the offers. No, no! Don't tell me Queenie has got over it! I know better!"

Sir John accepted the invitation and went away, wondering whether the Duke of Carnegie would ever persuade the fair widow to change her mind. Somehow he thought not. He fancied Lord Allerton was right, and Mrs. Stuart's sorrow was only smouldering, not extinct.

He went home to dream of The Elms. His dead wife Hyacinth stood before him, leading Mrs. Stuart by the hand.

"She will comfort you for my loss," said the well-remembered voice; then with a gentle touch the lost Hyacinth seemed to push her likeness into his arms.

"It is a wonderful resemblance!" thought Sir John, as he awoke and collected his scattered ideas. "I never saw a more pronounced resemblance even between sisters. Mrs. Stuart is

prouder—more, dignified—than my poor girl. She is a queenly woman—not the girlish creature of smiles and tears, but yet she is like her enough to bring my darling visibly before me."

He did not go to Eaton-square for nearly a week; he shrank from her, while he yearned for a meeting with the creature who was his dead wife's image. But at last, meeting the Duke of Carnegie in the Park, his Grace persuaded him to let them call together on Mrs. Stuart.

It was late for such visits, but no demur was made at admitting them. Hyacinth was alone in the small drawing-room with her little boy; she had thought the long string of callers ended, and rang for her little son. What a noble child he looked, with his mother's lovely eyes, and a look of his soldier-father about his mouth! The Duke and Max were old friends, so he took the boy on his knee, while Sir John greeted the beautiful widow.

They talked on many subjects. Both were well-versed in all the topics of the day. The Duke chaffed far; even little Max added his mite to the conversation. Sir John had thought Mrs. Stuart like his wife even in her rich, festive robes; but the resemblance was even more marked now.

"You are looking very agile," said the Duke, with something more than friendly interest. "Mrs. Stuart, do you think London suits you?"

"I hardly know. This season has been my first acquaintance with it; but we are soon going away. The Earl promises Max a sight of his Yorkshire moors next week."

"Yorkshire!" said his Grace, discontentedly; "I thought you would have gone abroad, or at least to some watering-place where one could meet you."

She smiled.

"I think we are all, then, a little homesick; I am tired of London. For my own part I should be content never to see it again."

"You prefer a country life!"

It was Sir John who addressed her.

"Yes; and I think it better for the child."

"The Towers is miles from any town; it is positively wicked of Lord Allerton to immerse you there."

"But if I like to be immersed!"

"It is incomprehensible."

"It is the simple truth; besides, the Towers is not so desolately situated as you suppose. We can drive to Whitby in two hours."

Sir John looked up quickly.

"Do you like Whitby, Mrs. Stuart?"

"I think it very beautiful."

The gentlemen took their leave, but his Grace of Carnegie was unusually silent as they walked down the walk.

"It's rather hard, John. I've scoffed at love all my life, and now that I'm harder hit than I thought possible it's all in vain."

"Are you sure?"

"I haven't put the formal question, but I feel sure of it. She's the fairest woman in London—the purest, the most true; but I have no more hope of winning her than if she were some far-off star."

"Nonsense!"

"It's true. Of course I shall ask her, but it's all useless."

"Do you fear a rival?"

"There's no man in London I fear unless it is yourself."

"You must be mad! I have seen her only twice; we are perfect strangers."

"I am not mad; I know you are really strangers, but she thinks of you as her husband's dearest friend. To-night she blushed whenever she spoke to you. You might not see it, but I did. I tell you, Carlyle, I would have given my dukedom for such a token of her favour."

"Nonsense!" repeated the baronet. "You are so jealous you distort things even to yourself."

Carnegie looked at his friend gravely; his brows were knitted, but he spoke more in sorrow than in anger.

"Do you believe in second sight?"

"I never thought about it. What is it?"

"The gift of being able to see future events years even before they come to pass."

"What rubbish!" I beg your pardon, Carnegie, but it seems so to me. You see there is not a grain of superstition in my nature."

"There is a great deal in mine. I am half a Scotchman, you know; my childhood was spent over the border, and as long ago as I can remember anything I know my nurse told me I had second sight."

"Well!"

"I shut my eyes now, as we walk along, and I see before me you living in your own home. It is in Kent, and the gates open upon a wide common."

"Well, Jack, I see you in that house with a lady on your arm, and it is she—Queenie. She looks into your face with loving glances, you bend and kiss her, you bid her welcome home, you call her by the sacred name of wife!"

He had been standing quite still, his eyes closed, an expression of deep attention on his face. Slowly he opened his eyes, his features lost their dazed, dreamy look—in a word, he came back to his usual manner.

Sir John stared.

"This is nothing but fancy."

"It is the sober truth."

"You ought not to give way to such feelings."

"I don't; they have no influence over me. I shall go to Mrs. Stuart to-morrow and plead my cause as passionately as man can plead it, but I know beforehand it will be hopeless."

"Carnegie, surely you do not think me base enough to have attempted to make myself agreeable to the object of your love?"

"I am sure you have not done so. I feel she will be your wife, something tells me so; and Jack, if I can never win her, there is no man in the world I would resign her to so willingly as yourself."

They parted, but the memory of that scene lingered long with Sir John. He himself considered Carnegie had little chance, and he was not surprised to receive a hurried note from him two days later.

"Have failed; am off to Norway. When my prophecy is fulfilled confess you were wrong to scoff at second sight."

But Sir John left London without another glimpse of Mrs. Stuart. The very moment he received the Duke's note there came a telegram which filled him with dismay, for it told plainly of the danger of his dearest friend.

"Kathleen Grant, Acacia Cottage, Elmer's Road, to Sir John Carlyle, Charing-cross, W."

"My husband is dying; his one desire is to see you. Oh! if you have any pity for us come at once."

He had never seen the Grants since his wedding-day. The artist was connected in his mind with Hyacinth, and perhaps that was the reason he had not sought him out on returning to England; but at the news of Arnold's danger the old affection welled up, warm and strong. In half-an-hour the baronet was in the train for Elmer's Road.

Acacia Cottage looked very dismal in the summer gloaming. Even before he knocked at the door Sir John told himself that things had gone badly with the artist. A benevolent-looking, elderly man opened the door; our baronet marvelled whom he could be. He was not a gentleman, but surely the Grants' *menage* did not boast a man-servant! The elderly party's first words explained his doubts.

"It's forty-nine pounds, eight and fourpence, and the amount of the execution with costs and expenses; and if you're the gentleman they're looking to to help them I hope you mean to do it, for I'll be right glad to get out of this place. They say Mr. Grant is dying fast, and I should be sort of scared to be in possession where there was a corpse."

Sir John shuddered; he took out his purse. By a strange coincidence he had that day been to the bank to cash a substantial cheque; his purse was full of notes and gold.

"I will satisfy every claim," he said, promptly; "but let me have a light and send someone to tell Mrs. Grant I am here."

A gentleman entered with a candle, no doubt

of his right to the title, though he was only a poor, hard-working doctor.

"Mr. Grant is sinking fast," he said to Sir John. "I have done my best, but with such distress, such poverty, everything was against him. It seems," went on the kind-hearted man, "he has not sold a picture for over a year; their savings were all gone, and they were too proud to write to friends."

"And Mrs. Grant?"

"She nursed him tenderly, but she is ill herself now."

"There are three babies," went on the Doctor, "and the youngest is only a few hours' old."

Sir John's conduct was very simple; he put his purse into the doctor's hands.

"Will you kindly settle with this man, and send the servants for anything your patients need. I must go to my poor friend now."

Was that Arnold Grant, that gaunt, cadaverous-looking man, whose face was lined with furrows, whose hollow eyes could hardly brighten, even at the sight of his old friend?

"I came the moment I got your message. Oh, Arnold! why couldn't you let me know before!"

"I couldn't; Katy sent them, the secret was killing me. Oh, John! how I have wronged you!"

"Wronged me!" asked the Baronet, in great surprise. "I am sure you have been my best and truest friend."

"I wronged you—a word from me, and your wife would never have left you."

"Arnold!"

"Aye, I heard you were parted. I guessed the reason, but I would not speak. I was doing badly even then. I thought that you would turn to as in your loneliness, that I should be your travelling companion as I used to be, that my wife and babies would have a home at The Elms. Everything had fallen with me, Jack. I was going from bad to worse, and I caught at this. I thought Lady Hyacinth once changed from your young home and purse would be ours."

Sir John felt troubled. He had cherished such faith and trust in Arnold Grant, had deemed him made of nobler stuff, and this was the end!

"It was gambling did it," went on the dying man. "I got to love cards and dice, and then it was all over with me. You may reclaim a drunkard, but a gambler never!"

He passed from sheer exhaustion.

"You sent for me," said Sir John, gently. "Tell me what I can do—tell me how I shall smooth your pathway to the grave."

"I want your forgiveness—your pardon, for having wrecked your life. A word from me and the estrangement between you and Lady Hyacinth would never have been."

"I believe that no one living knows the cause of that estrangement except myself," returned Sir John.

"Listen. There was an elderly lady living next door who had the charge of a little child, a baby boy. From time to time his mother came to visit him, but her name was never spoken. There was I know not what of mystery in her visits."

"Go on."

"Within a month of the last time she came here the news reached me that you had parted from your wife. I knew then that I had not been mistaken—that the mother of that nameless child was Lady Hyacinth Carlyle!"

"And that being so, how could a word from you or anyone else have changed things?"

"Your wife was young—almost a girl; she was a total stranger to London. What more likely than she should forget the name of the church where she was married!—that when you asked to see the certificate of her marriage she should have none to show! I argued this was the case; that with your passionate pride you would not take her unsupported word."

"I never thought of marriage," breathed Sir John; "it never crossed my mind."

"But she was married, and I, from mere curiosity, chancing to be in the church, witnessed

the ceremony. Later on, when I was presented to your fiancée, I recognised her as the bride of that dull November morning. At once I distrusted her. I feared, wearying of her stolen choice, she had forsaken her husband for you. I went to the church, obtained a copy of the certificate; then I searched the papers, and found her husband's death. She deceived you in marrying you without telling you she had been both wife and mother; but she was pure and innocent in all else, as is the devoted girl in the next room, who, ere to-morrow's dawn, must be a widow."

Sir John fairly gasped. The perspiration stood on his forehead in great beads. He never doubted her. Oh, why had the truth come so late! Would that he had trusted his darling! Why, rather, that he had not condemned her unheard!

"Where is the church?" he asked, breathlessly; "and what was her husband's name?" Arnold, tell me this, and I will bless your memory even now!"

The dying man opened his lips; but it was in vain. No sound escaped them. Sir John pealed the bell, and the doctor came up. He gave one glance at Arnold's wasted face, and said, reverently,—

"Heaven help the poor creature he leaves behind him! Oh, Sir John, how am I to tell that poor young mother she is a widow and her babies fatherless!"

CHAPTER XII, AND LAST.

SIR JOHN CARLYLE went downstairs from his friend's deathbed into the deserted parlour. How forlorn and desolate the room looked! It was but too evident that it had been stripped of all that made it bright and homelike—that every portable article of any value had been disposed of to procure the necessities of life.

But the baronet heeded nothing of all this. He closed the door, and leaning one arm upon the table he wept like a little child. Some of his tears were for the friend of his youth, who, with many gifts and talents, had sunk to such an end as this; but the greater part were for his wife—the sweet, true-hearted girl whom he had pronounced a sinner without giving her one chance to clear herself. If he could have undone the past by the sacrifice of his health and strength, aye, of years of his life, he would have blotted it out at any cost—at any labour.

He never doubted Arnold's confession. He would fain have heard the name of the church where his Hyacinth became a wife—fain have been told her husband's name; not that he wanted proof, but for a nobler, tenderer reason. It seemed to him he would give very, very much to claim her child, to bring him up as his own son.

Sir John felt, somehow, as if his wife would understand his bitter sorrow—his anguish of remorse if, looking down from Heaven, she could see her boy in his arms.

But Arnold Grant's confession had not thrown any light upon the past. Miss Johnson, Hyacinth's confidante, was dead. There seemed no one in the world likely to help the baronet in his search for the little child he had once hated and despised.

No one—stay! Dr. Warburton, who knew so much of Hyacinth's story, who had so heartily espoused her cause, he surely knew the name of her first husband.

Sir John felt overwhelmed. The physician had received him coldly, but when he heard his story—when he knew the terrible mistake which had wrecked his life—he would be more compassionate.

Sir John felt better. He was one of those men who, when once they have resolved on a course of future action, feel stronger to bear the sorrow which has come to them. He had made up his mind now, and putting his own grief from him, he could think of the misery of the little family at Acacia Cottage. Rising he went to the parlour-door to meet Dr. Pemberton on the threshold.

The latter tendered back his purse.

"I could almost envy you your wealth, Sir John," he said, gravely. "It has so much power to alleviate suffering. The man in possession has departed, the nurse has gone into Beckenham for a supply of food, the children have been fed. It is like a magician's wand, and it has all been done for fifty pounds."

Sir John replied,—

"Money will not do everything. Doctor, how am I to help Mrs. Grant? Her husband was my great friend; I would do all in my power for her."

The doctor threw up his hands.

"It's a sad business, Sir John. I don't see that she can earn her own living tied down as she is by three babies, and her husband has left nothing behind him but debts."

The Baronet was very thoughtful for a moment; then he said, slowly,—

"Have you any idea what they amount to?"

"Nearly a hundred. Poor Grant used to go over the figures in his delirium till the amount got burnt into my brain."

"You have known them some time!"

"Three years almost."

"I wonder if you would mind devoting a few hours to their service?"

"I fear it would not do them much good."

"I think so. If you would undertake the responsibility of collecting a list of all Mr. Grant's bills I would gladly send a cheque for the amount. I am an idle man, and I ought to manage this without troubling you, but I have urgent private reasons for wishing to get to Yorkshire as soon as possible."

The man of physic smiled.

"You are rarely generous!"

"No; I am a rich man, and I have neither wife nor child. I noticed, as I drove up, that this house was to be sold, and I think I had better purchase it, and let Mrs. Grant be my tenant. Of course I shall not expect any rent. Then if I give her two or three hundred pounds I think it would last until she could turn herself round. She might take boarders, or even begin a little school."

"It is more than many brothers would do for her."

"Is it? If I had a wife I might take them all home for a year or two, but I am a lonely man. I think my plan is best. Of course, if she can't get on I must allow her a little income. Will you let me send you a cheque? Dr. Pemberton could manage things for me."

"Do you know I am an utter stranger, and might cheat you?"

"I am not afraid," and shaking hands they parted.

The next evening Dr. Pemberton found a letter from Sir John. It was very short and simple. Two cheques were enclosed—one for five hundred pounds, the other for eighty guineas. In a few well-chosen words Sir John begged the doctor to apply the first to the necessities and liabilities of Mrs. Grant and her family; the latter he ventured to ask him to accept in payment of the bills which, "I feel sure, even if sent in, can never have been paid, and the loss of time which, I fear, must be the result of your assisting me in this manner."

Dr. Pemberton showed the second cheque to his wife.

"I have no manner of claim to it, Nellie, but I don't like to send it back. He has put it so delicately the most sensitive man would not be offended."

Her eyes glistened. She had six little children, and their income was very slender.

"Don't you think we might keep it, Tom? This quarter has been such a heavy one, and we wanted a few other pounds so much. This cheque seems to have come straight from Heaven."

They kept it; and I don't think any part of Sir John's vast wealth ever brought greater happiness to its recipients than did that eighty guineas.

Sir John himself went back to London. He would fain have started the very next morning for Whitby, but he was prevented by a sudden attack of illness. For three weeks he was unable to leave his room. Then, pale and thin, with

the marks of recent suffering on his face, he went to the east coast, and put up, as before, at the Royal Hotel.

As he sat over his breakfast the next day he just glanced at the visitors' list.

It was August, the month when Whitby is at its best, and he saw many familiar names; but the entry which struck him most was a short paragraph announcing that the Earl of Allerton and the Hon. Mrs. Stuart and son had arrived at the Royal.

"Here, in this very house! How strange! Poor Carnegie! I wonder if he is getting over his disappointment!"

Warned by his former experiences, Sir John waited to call upon Dr. Warburton until he saw the physician's brougham deposit its master at the gate. Five minutes later he knocked at the door.

The same page appeared, and recognised the visitor of six months ago; but the Baronet conquered his scruples by slipping half-a-sovereign into his hand, and so Dr. Warburton was summoned to his study to see the man he most despised.

"Sir John, I wonder at your persisting in forcing yourself upon my notice. It is not the action of a gentleman."

But the Baronet turned to him with a broken voice.

"Bear with me. I have only just learned the truth. I know now that my wife was true in thought and deed, but I was miserably deceived. I jumped to a conclusion, and in my jealous fury I gave her no opportunity of clearing herself."

The doctor listened attentively as Sir John went on. As the whole story was laid bare before him he gathered a little of what the proud man had suffered, and his tone became more genial.

"It is a thousand pities Mr. Grant did not make this communication to you before."

"Aye. It would have changed my whole life."

"It would not have kept your wife here, if Heaven had appointed for her to die."

"You don't understand," breathlessly. "She would have died in my arms. I should have heard her last words, seen her last smile. Dr. Warburton, you have judged me hardly, but you have no conception of the love I bore my wife. She was my life, my idol. I tell you I would sacrifice all I have in the world if it could bring her back to me only for one half-hour—if I could just hear her sweet voice murmur that she forgave me."

There was no mistaking his earnestness.

Dr. Warburton was lost in thought. Barely half an hour ago Hyacinth had quitted him; he knew she had gone straight to that lonely grave in the churchyard, which, though it bore her own name, contained the remains of her who had been almost mother to her.

A strange fancy struck him. Why should these two who loved each other be parted? Why should he not attempt their reunion? Perhaps Hyacinth still lingered by that grave; he would send her husband there. If they met, surely all that had divided them must be explained!

"They say the spirits of the departed still watch over those they loved," said the Doctor, with great feeling. "If you speak your love and your remorse by your wife's grave it will surely reach her pure spirit where she is. Her grave has not been neglected, Sir John; it is bright with summer flowers. I should like you to see it."

Sir John wrung his hand. He left the room and turned his steps towards the churchyard, taking the winding path which led to the spot where rested all that was mortal of his wife.

But surely he was mistaken! A slim, white-robed figure knelt over the grave, picking the withered leaves from a fair climbing rose.

Sir John started. At first he thought it was his wife's spirit there. He remembered that Mrs. Stuart was at Whitby, and recalled her extraordinary resemblance to Hyacinth.

He would have retreated, but the girl rose suddenly, and they stood face to face.

To Hyacinth there came the one idea—Dr. Warburton had betrayed her. There was a look of tenderness on her husband's face which made her hope. She breathed but one word,—
"John."

He stood as in a dream. Was it his wife—his Hyacinth—whom he believed sleeping beneath that turf, or was it the fair woman who so marvellously resembled her?

"Dr. Warburton has told you!" she said, looking at him with misty eyes. "I see it in your face. Oh! John, I did it for the best, I did, indeed!"

His arms were round her in a moment, her head rested on his shoulder. What though the gravestone before them bore her name, Sir John recked nothing. He had room but for one thought, one joy. This was his wife, his Hyacinth, given back to him, as it were, from the grave.

Who shall say in what words she told him of her generous sacrifice, or how he broke to her the cruel doubts he had cherished, which only Arnold Grant's confession had dispelled? I only know they talked long and earnestly, and that when they left the churchyard her hand rested on his arm.

He had much to learn—how his darling and the beautiful widow who seemed to him her image were one and the same; how the heir of Allerton was her son!

"Hyacinth, you must come home."

She shook her head.

"Are you afraid to trust me? My darling, I have treated you cruelly, but you need have no fears for the future."

"It is not that."

"What then, sweetheart?"

And she told him that awful doubt, whether, having been married in her maiden name instead of that of Stuart, she had ever been his true wife at all.

The thought made them grave and anxious, but after all it could not change their happiness.

They loved each other. Another ceremony would set aside all doubts of their first marriage, and the only creature who would really have suffered from the doubt was safe from all such things. No legal flaw in her mother's marriage could hurt little Nan among the angels.

In the fair September days Sir John Carlyle married Hyacinth Dacre, widow of Maxwell Stuart.

Their story never leaked out to the world at large. Dr. Warburton, Colonel Delaval, the Earl of Allerton, and a young couple in a quiet Sussex rectory knew the truth; others only remark on the great resemblance between Sir John's second wife and the ill-fated Lady Hyacinth.

The present mistress of The Elms is a beautiful, gracious woman, full of love and tenderness—of sympathy and compassion. She is always addressed as Lady Carlyle; Lord Allerton calls her Anne, Sir John says Queenie.

People thought it a delicate compliment to her predecessor that when a little daughter was born to her she called her Hyacinth.

More than two years have passed since Sir John found his wife. The Grants still live at Elmer's Rod, and are getting on bravely; the Duke of Carnegie is still abroad, and Mr. and Mrs. Yorke have since paid long visits to The Elms, where Dr. Warburton is a prime favourite with both Sir John and his wife.

The old Earl has gone to his rest now, and little Max is Lord Allerton, but he is too young yet fully to appreciate his honours. He adores his mother, and is a special pet with his step-father.

He is very fond of his baby-sister, and has already been taught to strew fragrant flowers over a little grave in Red Cross Churchyard.

Sir John has ceased to regret his first-born. Dearly as they loved her, he and her mother both feel thankful little Nan is safe in Heaven. They feel she was taken from them in May-time, as on the tender head would have been meted out the punishment of Hyacinth's error.

[THE END.]

SWEETHEART AND TRUE.

—102—

CHAPTER X.—(continued.)

"I CANNOT say yes or no," Olive answered, after a moment's silence; "for, indeed, when I reflect on it sometimes I hardly know whether I am or not. My state of mind upon the subject is as variable as the four winds of heaven. How can I help it, though?"

"There must be some cause for it, of course. No one could experience it without a great cause. What is it? What is the matter with your mind to make you feel like that?" he queried, seriously.

She waited a little, then she said feverishly,—

"I don't know myself; I used at one time to be happy enough—no one more so. Even this life was endurable, yes! and pleasant, too, for I never felt its dulness. I was a child, then, now—now I am a—woman," she ended, slowly.

"Not so very long, though," Alan rejoined, with a slight smile, looking round critically at her by his side. "If, as you say, you have passed the boundary line between child and woman it is but very lately."

"You are laughing at me," she said, quickly, glancing back at him. "You laugh, but I am very, very serious indeed."

"So am I," he puts in at once; "and what is more, I can tell you what is the matter with your mind."

"Can you? Are you sure of it?" she returned, with a little sad, kind of smile. "Well, tell me what it is, for I hardly know myself."

"You are lonely, you want a companion; if I may say so, a friend."

"Perhaps you are right. But I have Zouave, after all. I am not utterly without something," she returned, looking down at the dog lying by her side.

"True. But I meant a human, not a canine companion. A dog is a most true and faithful friend I grant you. Still, I myself could not be alone contented with that. Neither can you, take my word for it. In your secret heart you know I am right," he ended, earnestly.

"Perhaps you are," responded Olive, gazing over to the flowing, lapping water.

She knows he is right; has she not told herself the same thing a hundred times and more?

"Let me be that friend!" Alan said, softly, the next moment.

"You!" she repeated, turning quickly to him as he spoke. "You, my friend?"

"And why not, if you will let me be! I promise to be a true one, believe me."

"I think you would," said the girl, gazing wistfully at her companion with her great, shining brown eyes. "No, I will say I am sure you would."

"Well, is it a bargain then?" Alan asked, a little eagerly.

"After all, what is the use!" rejoined Olive, more measuredly.

"I don't understand you. What do you mean by 'what is the use'? Every use I think myself," he added, heartily.

"I mean that our ways lie in such opposite directions," she went on, in explanation. "For the present you may remain here, say for a week or two, holiday-making. Then you will go away, back to England probably, to your home, your friends, and—ah! yes!" she ended, hesitating over the last word; for how did she know that somewhere away from here there might not already be someone who was dear to him?

"Well," he said, briefly, "and supposing it was, as you say, what of that?"

"You are pretending not to understand me," she rejoined, almost with reproach in her voice. "Do you not see, that when you do leave Pont l'Abbaye in all human probability I shall never see you again?"

"No!" he argued, obstinately. "I cannot see it in that light at all, because it would not be a fact."

"I think it would. So in that case what is the use of making any bargain about being friends?"

"But I should come back. We should see each other again. Now, what other objection can you raise, you terribly practical young lady?" he said, gaily.

"When?" she asked, quietly, ignoring his latter question. "When would you come back?"

"Soon, I am sure," he answered, more gravely; "for I don't think I could keep away for very long," he ended, in a lower tone.

"Ah!" she rejoined, with her small shrug, "you say so now, but when you were away you would forget all about Pont l'Abbaye."

"No; indeed you wrong me if you think that. I should always think of Pont l'Abbaye and—and yourself with the greatest pleasure, as being one of the most pleasant of all my recollections. You do not, evidently, give me credit for possessing much constancy," he amended, not without some slight mortification, for he would have her think as well of him as he does of her.

"I say nothing whatever about your constancy," puts in Olive, very quickly, "for I do not know you sufficiently well to be able to judge of it. That is not the question we are discussing."

"What a strange girl you are!" he commented, after a pause. "In some things you seem to possess all the savoir faire and argument of a woman of the world. In others you are as unconventional and unsophisticated as Daphne of Arcadia herself. I wonder why it is!"

"I often wonder at myself, too," she returns, with nonchalance; "it is not a very interesting subject, I know," with her little shrug.

"Pardon me, I cannot agree with you there. I consider you a very interesting subject indeed, and that is one reason why I ask you to strike a bargain and be friends. Why do you object to this very natural arrangement?"

"Oh! I don't exactly object," Olive answered, slowly; "but, as I said just now, what is the use? It is not a necessity. We are not obliged to be."

"Most certainly not, more especially as you seem so very averse to it. I must say," he went on, rather sorrowfully, "that I did not imagine you would have disliked the idea so much, or I would never have proposed it."

There is a short silence; then Olive turned to her companion, and said timidly,—

"Are you vexed with me?" for she imagines he is silent because she is angry.

"No, not vexed, only a little bit sorry, I own. I suppose I liked the idea so much myself that I thought you must do the same. I was only mistaken, that was all," he rejoined, quietly.

She has tried to harden her heart, but at this speech she relapses into softness once more.

"Well," she began again, "if you really wish it."

"I do," he answers, eagerly, "I wish it very much. Your hand on it."

She stretches it out without another word.

"Now you are sensible," Alan said, approvingly, taking it in his. "The bargain is thus signed, sealed, and delivered, is it not? Zouave is a witness to the perfect good faith of the transaction. Upon my word, I feel more light-hearted already."

"Now you have your own way," Olive laughed, perhaps feeling lighter of heart as well as he.

"Are you always so obstinate about anything?"

"When I have set my heart upon it I may say yes," he returned, complacently.

"You have a heart, then?" queried the girl, somewhat mischievously, rising from the seat.

"I sadly fear I have," he answered, pulling the ends of his moustache, and rising too, for he knows time is up and she is going.

"You sadly fear!" she echoed, looking up at him. "Why do you say fear? Is it such a very tiresome possession, then?"

"If you have not already found that out you will find it."

"Why, there is the Angelus bell ringing!" Olive said, the next moment. "It must be getting late, and the shadows are falling over the river. There is one on me now—look, right

across me—while you are still in sunshine," she ended, fancifully.

"Come into the sunshine with me. Why should any shadow fall on you and not on me? Are we not friends now?"

"There it is on us both now—both in shadow, and the sun is going away from us."

"Yes, you are right, and that means let us be happy while we can," he amended, impetuously.

"Happy while we can," echoed the girl, low-voiced. "What is happiness, after all? One hears so much about it. What is real, true, lasting happiness, I wonder!" lifting her eyes to his.

"Poets say to love is to be happy! Are they right, think you?"

"How should I know—I cannot tell! There, the shadow is gone again. You see it did not stay long over us. In another second or two we shall both be in sunshine once more."

"If one could but always stay there," Alan said, softly.

"If we could, but I fear we cannot, for I, for one, must depart."

"By the bye, about the fête; that is another vexed question between us. You are coming with me, are you not?"

"You have had your own way in one thing. I suppose you must have it in the other. I think I may be able to manage it. Good-night!"

"Good-night what?"

She looked at him wondering what he meant.

"My name is Alan!" he went on, seeing her wonderment. "Friends always call each other by their Christian names. That is one of the signs and duties of friendship to be informal. I have a fancy to hear you say, 'Good-night, Alan' before you go. Say it to please me—do!"

There is a pause; then comes a soft, low-voiced murmur,—

"Good-night—Alan!"

"You are a—good-night, Olive!" he returned, breaking off the first part of his sentence.

"Good-night, little friend Olive!"

Then they turn apart, and Fate has added another link to the chain she has woven around these two.

"She's a darling!" Alan Chichester communed with himself, as he wandered listlessly back into Pont l'Abbaye. "I nearly told her so, too. I wonder if she would have been very angry if I had. She is such a strange, proud-minded, sweet little damsel that perhaps she might have been frightened away if she had heard me make such a remark. I believe I'm getting besotted about that girl—I do, indeed! How deliciously she said 'Good-night, Alan!' I could have caught her up in my arms and kissed her there and then. I shall do it, too, if I see much more of her; and why should I not see more of her if I like! I am old enough to please myself, and I don't think the dear old pater would cross me in any great wish of mine. I am sure she is worth a thousand of most girls. What lovely brown trusting eyes she has, and such a pretty, pathetic, childish manner with it all! I don't believe she thinks she is at all lovely; perfectly unconscious of it, at any rate. Yes, Olive is a darling!" fervently.

And Alan ended his soliloquy with a real thrill and throb at his heart.

You see Fate had nearly finished forging the golden chain, and this thrill was one of the last wanting links.

"O! thoughtless mortals, ever blind to fate! Too soon dejected, and too soon elate!"

CHAPTER XI.

"I know not how it is, but a foreboding presses on my heart. I have heard, and from men learned, that before the touch of good or ill a subtler sense informs some spirits of the approach of 'things to be.'"

WHEN Olive reached the water-mill and went indoors she found Miss Rebecca Daunt sitting in the large, low oak-beamed room, which did duty as their dining and general sitting-room, reading what looked like a somewhat lengthy epistle, which André no doubt had but lately brought

from the village post-office, where daily the rumbling old diligence deposited the day's letters at eventide, from whence they had to be fetched by their different owners to whom they might be addressed.

Miss Daunt looked up with a frown upon her high forehead, on either side of which swept a smooth band of thick black hair, as the girl entered the room. The frown was not directed at Olive, but seemed the effect of the contents of the letter she held in her hand. But it might not have been anything very important, for Miss Daunt would always sooner frown than smile at the best of times.

However, as she looked up, she began in her usual hard, matter-of-fact kind of way.

"I have been reading a letter which I have just received from my brother, Olive."

"Oh, indeed, Miss Daunt," returned Olive, indifferently, for it was not any unusual circumstance, besides which her mind was so engrossed upon what had been taking place but so short a time earlier that everything else faded into complete insignificance beside it.

Had the announcement been in any way whatever peculiar, which it was not, I think she would have felt at this moment the same indifference upon the subject.

The only thing about it was that as Miss Daunt hardly ever took any trouble to announce when she received corresponding letters from her brother, her doing so now might mean that the said letter spoke of something especially unusual or interesting.

"He informs me that he intends visiting us at Moulinot," went on Miss Daunt, the next moment folding up the letter and replacing it in its envelope.

"Oh!" said Olive again, much less indifferently than before, but her exclamation betrayed no more pleasure in its sound the second time than in the first.

In fact, an acute observer might have detected some small ring of vexation, or even dismay, in that brief monosyllable "Oh," which was her only form of comment on Miss Daunt's explanation. Then she added a query on her own account.

"When is he coming?"

"He says we may expect him on Thursday next."

"And to-day is Tuesday," reflected the girl, aloud. "Is he going to stay long?"

"I really cannot inform you, Olive," returned Miss Rebecca, coldly, for she saw that the girl did not evince any marked delight at the news of her brother's advent. "I dare say he will remain some few days. As long as usual, possibly."

"He was here a week last time," Olive put in, quietly. "I wonder if he will stay a week this!"

"Really, Olive, you put the matter in an exceedingly odd manner. One might almost imagine to hear you that my brother's visit was only looked upon in the light of an affliction."

"And they would be perfectly right, too," thought Olive, but she wisely kept her thought to herself.

"Instead of being an honour," went on Miss Daunt, severely. "You at least ought to consider it so."

"But I don't," again thought Olive, mutinously. "I should not care if he never came at all. I don't care to see him, and I wish he would keep away altogether, that I do," but never one word did she utter, for policy sake.

"Yes, my brother Stephen's coming to Moulinot ought to mean a great deal to you if you were a sensible individual," with pronounced accent.

"I don't believe I am very sensible, Miss Rebecca," was all Olive dared to murmur.

"No, you are not, I know," rejoined Miss Daunt, cuttingly, eyeing the girl with those hard, black eyes of hers. "Otherwise you would often behave differently to what you do. I am fully aware that you are not sensible—your general conduct shows it most lamentably, I am sorry to say. I have endeavoured to make you what I would like to see you ever since I have had the

direction and management of you, but the result is not all I could wish."

"Where do I fall in pleasing you, Miss Rebecca?" said Olive, inquiringly, wishing to lead her away from the subject of her brother Stephen.

As a child Olive had feared and dreaded the harshness of this woman and the glances of those hard black eyes; but this dread and fear had been slowly wearing itself away since she had stepped over the boundary-line between childhood and girlhood. Somehow, to-day she seemed to dread it less even than usual. The sense of possessing a friend in the background—a real, true friend—was a comfort.

"It would please me better to see you less of a bohemian in your ways and habits. If you employed more of your time in going to the Convent of St. Ursula, and learn meekness of the nuns."

"Ah!" commented the girl, briefly.

"I do not consider it seemly for a young woman to be wandering about the lanes and roads alone, as you seem to find a pleasure in doing."

"Not quite so much alone, perhaps, as you imagine, Miss D.," thought Olive, with a little grim enjoyment in her muttered thought.

"I have not interfered with this bohemianism as much as I ought, perhaps, to have done," continued Miss Rebecca, coldly, "hoping that time would cure you of these childish follies."

"So it will—in time," put in the girl, with a demure smile, which Miss Daunt did not notice, or it might have called forth some extremely severe remark.

"And also" with emphasis, ignoring the girl's little speech—"because my brother Stephen wished that you should be permitted a certain freedom of action and liberty, which he considered beneficial for you. But for this wish on his part I should myself have made your daily attendance at the convent compulsory."

"Oh!" murmured Olive, under her breath.

"He, however, wished differently, and I allowed that wish to be pre-eminent. You have very much to be thankful to him for, I can tell you, in more ways than this one, though you may not think so, young lady," with some severity.

"I have never doubted it that I know of, Miss Rebecca," answered the girl, rather carelessly.

She did not care to hear to whom she had owed her freedom and liberty to wander hither and thither, almost at will, so long as it remained to her; but if judicious agreement would keep it, a little harmless outward agreeing might prove more beneficial than contradiction, which always aroused Miss Daunt's coldest and most cutting sarcasms, some of which often mystified her, and to which she could attach no meaning, though she recognised that Miss Rebecca did not intend their meaning to be pleasant at any rate.

"It will be for your own good that you do not, and you will also do well to show him that you do not doubt it when he gives you an opportunity of proving your words."

"I wonder how I am supposed to show my gratitude!" thought Olive, with some inward puzzling, but this question she did not think it necessary to ask Miss Daunt, for she did not want to call down upon her unlucky head any more diatribes on her sins of omission and commission, especially just now.

Indeed, her whole mind was so full of thought about Alan Chichester that she could not dwell on anything else, and what was more, she did not want to. He was enough for any amount of pensive cogitation.

"There is another thing which, perhaps, I may as well mention while I am about it," continued Miss Rebecca, with her black eyes fixed on the letter, which she kept turning over and over in her fingers.

Had such a thing been probable or even possible, Olive could have imagined that Miss Daunt was in a small measure discomposed, and showed it by this restless turning over of

her brother Stephen's letter; but such a proceeding was so unnatural that the girl could not give any credence to the idea. Then the cold voice went on smoothly with the rest of the sentence.

"You are no longer a child, and can understand what I am going to say. It is better to mention it now, to prepare your mind a little. I suppose I may conclude, Olive, that you are not aware that my brother Stephen is—attached to you!"

Olive stared at Miss Daunt—sitting by the oak table—in blank amazement. Had a thunder-bolt suddenly dropped in front of her she could not have been more astonished at its advent without any previous warning, than she was now at Miss Rebecca's speech. It literally struck her dumb for the moment. Then she echoed, feebly, as if groping about in the dark to find something she had lost,—

"Attached to me! Mr. Stephen Daunt attached to me?"

Such an idea had never penetrated her girl's brain in the remotest degree. When he had come he had always been kind to her, much kinder than Miss Daunt was, she remembered quite well. Kind, yes, but attached! that was another thing completely. It meant all kinds of extraordinary things if it were really true; and Olive knew of old that Miss Rebecca never condescended to joke about anything, even in her mildest moods, so it could be no jest.

"I can understand that it surprises you," said Miss Rebecca, noticing how completely amazed the girl really was, so amazed that she could only feebly echo what was imparted to her: "that you feel overwhelmed for the moment."

"I had no idea; I never thought of such a thing, indeed," murmured Olive again, faintly, still staring open-eyed at the figure by the table.

"I supposed not; therefore, I considered it prudent to mention it before my brother came, as he will probably say something to you before he leaves."

And for the second time within a few minutes Miss Daunt hesitated in her speech, which showed more than anything else that her mind was slightly uneven and discomposed.

"Say something to me!" echoed the girl, slowly, once more. "What do you mean? I don't understand. What will he say to me?"

"Really, Olive, your obtuseness astonishes me," returned Miss Daunt, with unconcealed irritation of voice and manner.

She thought the girl ought to have jumped at the suggestion at once, without further parley, instead of exhibiting this crushed kind of wonderment.

Stephen Daunt had written to his sister: "Perhaps it would be as well to prepare her mind," and she had endeavoured to prepare it in accordance with this wish, but the preparation, on the face of it, did not look so eminently satisfactory as it should do. Miss Daunt saw not only amazement, but also a certain amount of dismay mixed with it. Pleasure was conspicuous by its absence both from feature and voice.

"At this moment you look idiotic," she went on, cuttingly. "Stephen is not attached to brains at any rate, whatever else he may be. He is much too good for you."

"Of course," murmured the girl, faintly, again.

She had not recovered from the blow yet. It had all been so sudden, so undreamt of, until the last quarter of an hour, that it had, metaphorically speaking, taken her breath away.

"That is his business, however, not mine. I have done my best to make you worthy; if I have failed it is my misfortune. For the future he will be the one to see to that. Remember that you owe him everything; without him you have nothing at all, neither position, money, future, literally nothing. In remembering this, you will do well to accede to everything that he wishes."

It was on the tip of Olive's tongue to say, "and what is that?" but she refrained. "I shall soon know when he comes, no doubt. I will wait until then. Perhaps it may be some-

thing disagreeable, something I shall not want to do. I have heard quite enough for one day, I am sure."

"You can go," said Miss Rebecca the next moment, looking up at the girl still standing the other side of the table, almost nervelessly. "I have said all I wish to say at present, and when my brother comes on Thursday I trust you will treat him as he deserves to be treated, with gratitude—and—and—affection!"

For the third time Miss Daunt hesitated ere she finished her speech. It was an important sign to anyone who knew her ordinary calm, dispassionate, smooth diction, and meant a great deal more than appeared on the surface.

Olive thus dismissed, moved slowly away from the room, and went upstairs to her own little chamber under the eaves, with its carved oak dormer window, looking out over the pool.

"Oh! Zouave! what does it all mean?" she said, movingly, as she entered and closed the door behind herself and dog. "Tell me what it all means, you dear old faithful doggie, for I am sure I don't know myself."

"Stephen Daunt attached to me!" she mused, seating herself by the open lattice, where the roses and clematis quarrelled for first entry. "What an extraordinary thing if it is true! It must be true, I suppose, or Miss Daunt would never say so. Why should he be attached to me? I wish he was not. I would much rather he was not. I don't like him, not in that way, in any case. I am not attached to him in the slightest degree. I am not attached to anyone that I know of—at least I don't think I am," rather dubiously though.

"Fancy Stephen Daunt—grave, sober, morose-looking Stephen Daunt—being attached to poor me! I can't fancy it at all. Bah! the idea is not quite—quite pleasant, somehow. Besides, he is old, ever so much older than I am, quite middle-aged, and not a bit nice-looking, like Alan Chichester, for instance—" and she plucked a rose and a little spray of clematis, and put them together at her breast.

"I wonder how long he has been, as Miss Daunt calls it, attached to me!" the girl continued, meditatively, interlarding her fingers on the broad ledge, and leaning her dusky head against the lattice. "Let me see now. When he was here last year did he say or do anything to make me think so? No, I can't remember that he did. I know I always thought him nicer than his sister since I was only a tiny thing, but then that is not saying much for him," with a small pout of her rosy lips, and the little emphatic shrug.

"And he is going to say something to me. What! I wonder! But I don't want anything said to me—not by Stephen Daunt, at any rate. Oh! dear me, Zouave, I feel as if something was going to happen, something disagreeable I mean. Of course, it's only a presentiment, but there it is, all the same. What would you do now if you were me?" and Olive fixed her brown eyes on the dog's face.

As if in answer he came and laid his head in her lap when she had finished speaking, and she smoothed the soft black ears caressingly.

"Ah! my dear old doggie," she went on the next moment, "perhaps after all it would have been better for us if we had gone on in the same humdrum fashion, you and I—no artists, no wanderings, no making friends. It may be a huge mistake, after all. And yet—and yet, I am glad I have known him," Olive ended, thoughtfully.

And of course she meant Alan.

"Attached is a horrid word, don't you think, Zouave! Such a cold stiff, formal word. To say 'in love' is much nicer to my mind. Not in this case, though," she amended, quickly, that there might linger no doubt about it in Zouave's mind, so as to lead him to make any mistake. "Oh, no, not in this case. To be in love with Stephen Daunt!"—with a little shudder—"no, I could not. Nothing could make me, even if I had not seen Alan. Stephen is so cold, so black looking, so silent, and Alan is so—so nice. I don't mind telling you that I think so, my dog, because I do. He is nice, very nice, indeed. I like him much, very much, I might say in-

namely. But I don't believe I am—in love with him. I am not positively certain, though, to be perfectly truthful with you. Still, I don't think I am—very doubtfully—at least not yet. But he is very, very nice!"

Then she closed her lattice, perhaps to shut out Love, but if it was so, I am afraid she was too late.

Eros had already flown in, through the roses and clematis, like the beautiful little god he was; so she shut him in instead of outside, which might have been wiser, it is true, but not half so sweet.

For love is sweet, say what one will!

CHAPTER XII.

"And what is friendship but a name?
A charm that fails to sleep."

"NANNETTE, a piece of news for you. Mr. Stephen is coming."

So said Olive the next morning, after the early breakfast in the oak-panelled room which was part of Miss Daunt's domain in the old mill-house. The girl had been brimful of wish to impart the news to Nannette; and directly the meal was finished, and the two had risen from the table, Olive had sought the old woman in her own special department, and immediately delivered herself of the above speech.

At breakfast no more mention had been made by Miss Rebecca on the subject of her brother's intended visit; but Miss Daunt never made a practice of dilating upon any subject whatever, except perhaps the one relating to poor Olive's fancied misdemeanours; besides which she may have considered that she had said enough the previous evening, and the subject might now remain in abeyance.

Olive, however, knew perfectly well that whether the coming of Mr. Stephen Daunt was again referred to by his sister or not, it was, nevertheless, a most assured fact all the same.

The girl imparted the interesting information in a plaintive voice, hardly indicative of any amount of pleasure derivable from the event. Hitherto his advent had been very much a matter of indifference; but now, after Miss Daunt's announcements of the previous evening, which was something quite new and unlooked-for, made the matter assume quite a different complexion in Olive's mind.

The contemplation became at once disagreeable.

"Ah! is it so? but madame has said nothing to me of it," returned Nannette, who was busily engaged in polishing her big brass pans, rubbing them till they shone again, like the mirrors of the ladies of the old Roman Empire.

"She only told me last night after I came in. She said his letter came by the evening mail. I found her reading it, so I suppose it did."

"When does Monsieur Stephen arrive?" queried Nannette, looking over at Olive's sweet face, which certainly wore a dismal expression.

"Oh, soon, quite soon. Much too soon," answered Olive, quickly.

She never dreamt of concealing the real state of her feelings from the old woman, who was, indeed, to be regarded in the light of a thoroughly staunch friend and helper.

"But tell me which day, my mademoiselle!"

"On Thursday next, the day after to-morrow," returned the girl, still dimly.

"Do you not want to see Monsieur Stephen here at Moulinot, then?" queried Nannette again, quietly. She had her own ideas on the subject of the girl's obvious dismay, but she invariably allowed her to tell her tale in her own fashion, which after all is much the best plan.

"No, Nannette, I don't," said Olive, with perfect candour.

"Perhaps he will not stay long this time," put in the old woman with a cheerful inflexion of voice.

"I am sure I hope not. Yes, indeed I really do hope he will not stay long, Nannette," Olive went on, in a slow, pondering fashion. "I want to ask you a question. Have you ever noticed

when Mr. Stephen has been here that he was—as at all—attached to me?" and the girl fixed her great brown eyes anxiously on Nannette's wrinkled brown face.

The old woman paused in her rubbing, and looked quickly back at the girl.

"Why do you ask me such a thing, my mademoiselle? What makes you think it?"

"Oh! I did not think of it, I assure you," said Olive, with a little shrug. "I would much rather not think of it at all. It was Miss Rebecca who put the idea into my head. She said that she thought it right to tell me that Mr. Stephen was 'attached' to me. Now, did you ever notice anything of the sort when he has been here?"

"Well, I have never thought of it like that," returned Nannette, dubiously.

"Nor did I until last night. I always imagined he looked upon me as a baby; I did, indeed. All I can say is, that if it is true, it is the most curious thing possible. Don't you think so?"

"I do not find it so very wonderful a thing, my angel!" said Nannette, beginning to rub her brass once more.

"Oh, Nannette! don't say that," cried Olive, quickly.

"But why not, if it is the truth?"

"I hoped you would have found it very extraordinary indeed," said Olive, disappointedly, in return; "but why don't you, Nannette; tell me why you don't think it odd?"

"Is it not natural that Monsieur Stephen should like something beautiful?" answered the old woman, with a trace of pleasant mirth in her eyes.

"Which means that you consider me 'something beautiful,'" rejoined the girl, but without the smallest sign of gratification or feminine vanity in her voice.

"Without a doubt I mean it," assented Nannette, with a nod of her snow-white starched cap.

"I suppose I ought to be very glad that I am beautiful then?" but she said it rather discontentedly all the same.

"It is pleasant to be beautiful, my angel; a gift from Heaven. It is right to be glad of it," put in the old woman, simply.

"Well, perhaps I am glad for some things," Olive assented the next moment, thinking of Alan Chichester, and that she would like to look her best in his eyes. Then she thought of Stephen Daunt, and added, slowly, "but certainly not for others."

"To be beautiful is to be beloved," said Nannette, sententially, as an infallible axiom.

"I quite agree that it is very nice to be beloved by the right person; but, supposing it is the wrong person, it is not much use being beautiful then. Much better be very plain, I think," ended the girl, with conviction.

"Monsieur Stephen is the wrong person, then, my little mademoiselle; and you are not glad to hear that he is, as Madame Rebecca calls it, attached to you?"

"No, I am certainly not glad. Quite the contrary."

"So you do not desire to have him for a lover?" pursued the old woman, a little slyly.

"Oh, Nannette!" cried Olive, clasping her hands together; "if it came to that I should—I should hate him! Miss Rebecca surely cannot mean that. It would be detestable."

"Listen now, my angel," put in the old woman, soothingly; "take my advice, trouble yourself about it no more one way or the other. Time will soon show how it really is; when Monsieur Stephen comes you can then quickly judge for yourself. Think of it no more, but go and gather me some Reine Claude plums from the south wall; I want them to make a conserve. They are ready to pluck, I know; my André said so this very dawn when he came in from the garden. Here is a little basket all ready for you."

So without further parley Olive heaved a small sigh, took up the basket from the table and went out through the open door into the garden of the old water-mill, which flanked the back and sides,

shut in by a high brick wall, except on the side leading into the orchard beyond; there the wall ran lower, and was covered with patches of green soft moss and lichens.

She began gathering the rich golden plums rather listlessly, not because she was really idly inclined, or that the task was at all distasteful to her, but simply that her mind was full of thought, to her weighty enough.

Indeed, so full of fancy and mental cogitation was she that, as time passed, she did not see a figure come through the orchard and up to the low part of the garden wall, lean its elbows on the soft green moss patches, and watch her attentively.

She made a pretty picture, standing in the shadow of the high, red brick wall, against which hung the ripe golden fruit which she kept plucking from its stem, and laying in the basket by her side.

Presently the contemplative figure picked up a little green apple which had fallen on the grass from a tree above, and threw it at the basket, within a few yards away. The apple struck the side with a little flop, and startled the girl from her day-dreaming.

She turned quickly at the sound, and saw the silent figure waiting on the other side of the stone barrier, betwixt garden and orchard.

At sight of this same figure a pretty smile of pleasure lit up her face, and she moved towards the wall.

"You see, I have ventured into the lion's den," Alan began, as she neared him, "at least I have ventured thus far. Do you think I may come any farther with safety, or must I keep here without the precincts?" he ended, smilingly.

"Oh! you are quite safe as far as Miss Daunt is concerned, if that is what you mean," Olive answered, looking up at him, and thinking with a pang at heart how it will be when this figure is about no more, and its place is empty.

"That is what I do mean. I am certainly not afraid of anyone else," he remarks, briskly. "I may come in, then," and he walks to the wooded-barred gate close by which leads from the orchard into the mill garden, opens it, and comes in.

"How did you know I was here?" queries Olive the next moment, as they move towards the plums, which she had so hastily quitted.

"Well," he answered, looking down at her, "if I went in for pretty speeches I should vow it was instinct led me this way, but being a poor hand at that sort of thing I'll tell the truth, and confess it was Moulinot's owner, André Blaise, who told me where you were to be found this glorious summer morning. The fact is, I wanted particularly to see you, and actually had the hardihood to approach the mill from the front, hoping to catch sight of you somewhere about. But complete solitude seemed to reign around. Then I thought you might have gone somewhere, down to Sablette or Quimpalre, only you had not said anything about it last evening. Even the dragon was invisible."

"The dragon generally is reading or writing at this hour; she is not in the habit of wandering about at any time of the day, like poor me," rejoined Olive, with a smile. "But why did you want to see me?" she added, with some small curiosity on the subject.

"I am coming to that in a moment. Not having the effrontery to go boldly up to the door and ask for Miss Olive Lyster for fear of total annihilation by the dragon, I was wondering how on earth I could compass finding you when I saw André Blaise in the distance carrying a bundle of faggots, so I straightway bore down upon him, and made my inquiry. He informed me that he had just seen you picking Reine Claudes in the garden, and that if I went round where he pointed and through the orchard I should infallibly find you gathering the said fruit. Delightful old man! I blessed him silently to myself, and offered him a couple of my cigarettes, which he accepted with a profusion of thanks and smiles. I really did not like to offer him money."

"He would not not have taken it if you had,"

and he would appreciate the cigarettes far more, I assure you," rejoined Olive. "André is rather above taking money like that; he would consider it rather derogatory to his dignity."

"So I fancied he might, but he seemed pleased with the smokes. He did not seem at all astonished in any way at my inquiry, but seemed to take it as a matter of course. We parted, I followed his advice, and here I am. Do you know, I was watching you picking those plums for quite five minutes, and every now and then such a dreadful little frown puckered up your forehead. I wondered who you could be frowning at mentally—not me, I do hope!" he added, rather earnestly.

"No," she answered, lifting those great shining brown eyes to his face, "I am sure I should not frown if I was thinking about you. But did I really frown so dreadfully?"

"Yes, you really did. You knitted that little forehead of yours in a most alarming way; it quite made me tremble for myself in case it should turn out to be me."

"No, it was not you, certainly," Olive said, in her sweet soft voice; "but you have not told me why you wanted to see me particularly this morning."

"True," he emphasised in answer. "I believe I was beginning to forget my own errand, the *raison d'être* of my appearance on the scene, and, to be honest, I rather wish the reason did not exist. Things generally come about exactly when one does not want them. The fact is," he went, with a sudden air of restraint, "I really came to tell you that I am bound to leave Pont l'Abbaye to-morrow."

"Oh!" said Olive, with a little gasp. For the moment she could say nothing more than that painful little monosyllable. She had known well enough that any moment she might hear this same thing, and yet now she did hear it, it was inexpressibly sorrowful to her.

It was a dreadful little shock to her, and all the gladness and soft light died out of her big brown eyes.

"Before I left England," he went on again, quickly, "I promised some relations to meet them in Paris on their way south, and be discreet during the time they remained in Paris. They had not settled then exactly what time they would be there, but it was arranged they should let me know. Last night I found some letters forwarded to me here, fixing the time. I ought to have had the letter three days ago, which would have given me time to look about me, and arrange things; now, of course, I shall have to be off almost at once. That is to-morrow."

"It is very soon," Olive said, dully, and she could not help letting her sorrow steal into her sweet voice as she spoke.

"Yes! it is soon," he responded, quickly. "I don't half like being ordered off like that at a moment's notice. I don't want to go," he added, impetuously. "We have not had half our jaunts, together yet, have we?"

"No!" answered the girl, still in the same dull monotone. The summer glory seemed to have suddenly died away, and left a chill dreariness around; though the sun still shone, the flowers bloomed, and the birds sang.

"And we shall not be able to go to the Tudité fête," he said, again. "After all, I have a great mind to write and say I cannot come."

"I don't think you ought to do that if you promised to meet your people," returned the girl, looking up at him wistfully.

She would dearly liked to have said, "Don't go, stay with me, stay always, for ever;" but what the heart cries to itself the tongue may not utter aloud.

"I know I ought not. They will expect me as a matter of course, and I don't know how they would manage without me, to be candid. Yes, I suppose there's nothing for it but to go and do one's duty, and leave one's pleasure behind. After all, I don't believe you care much whether I go or stay," he added, rather impetuously, glancing down at the sweet face beside him, and the soft fingers gathering the golden fruit from its stalk.

When a man is in love he does not mind how unjustly he speaks. Alan saw perfectly well how

full of sorrow the girl was, how quickly the tinted cheeks had paled, and the light died out from those glorious eyes, and yet he was not satisfied, but must needs beg the question once again.

"Oh! do not say that," she rejoined, with a little quiver of pain in her voice. "It is not true that I do not care whether you go or stay. I do care, and I am very sorry you are going," she ended, ceasing to gather the *Reine Claude*, and turning towards Alan with uplifted, pathetic eyes, and clasped fingers.

Why should she pretend she does not care, when her whole heart aches with sorrow at the bare thought of his absence! Until the last half-hour she had been happy enough, thinking when she should see him next, and now he stood there telling her he was going—going to leave Pont l'Abbaye to-morrow! Only a few hours from this very moment.

In this dreadful heartache she recognised that this man was already more to her than any other human being, more than her faithful dog. It must be love that she felt. Love! and he was going away from her to-morrow.

"I do—believe you are!" he said, slowly, after her, looking back to those uplifted eyes. So they stand silently for a full minute, while who can say what each heart told itself with a throb in that silence full of such sweet and tender meaning.

At last she rouses herself a little.

"What time do you leave Pont l'Abbaye to-morrow?" she queried, trying to force herself to feel calm and more practical on the question.

"Early in the morning. I believe the diligence starts at six o'clock, which enables me to catch the train at Bannalec."

"Yes! the diligence goes at six, I know. I shall not see you then—after—to-day!" she went on, with ever so faint a falter in her tones.

"I must go to-morrow, you see, or I shall not be in time," he answered, vexedly.

"Then we must say—good-bye now!" she went on, trying to say it evenly. "Well, you see, I was right after all."

"Right about what?"

"About the uselessness of our being friends," she returned, drearily; "our poor friendship has come to an untimely end."

He pauses a moment before he answers; then he says, very, very quietly,—

"Yes! our poor friendship has come to an untimely end, as you say. I am afraid we must say good-bye to it for ever from to-day, bid it a long farewell."

"Well," said Olive, with the dearest ghost of a smile on her face, "I am ready; let us get it over soon—now, at once. Let us say our farewell to it quickly, and be done with it."

How ready he seems to say a good-bye which is almost like a death to her heart to utter. How easily he can talk of bidding a farewell for ever; and yet he seems sorry too, though he speaks so lightly.

Then the girl stretches out one soft brown palm towards Alan.

"Good-bye, then!" she murmurs, quickly, keeping her eyes lowered, and not daring to lift them now, lest he should see their humid depths and shame her.

He takes it in his.

"How eager you are to send me away!" he said, softly, holding it closely.

"No, no!" she cried, with a little catch in her breath; "but if it must be said now, why not let it be got over quickly. I do not find it so pleasant a thing to linger over."

"Nor I," he answered, gravely; "far from it. But we are not going to say our good-bye to poor friendship like that," still holding that soft palm in his.

"How then?" Olive murmured; "how else can we say it! I can think of no other way."

"We will bid it farewell to-night, Olive!" Alan said, quickly, "this evening by the river. It will be easier said than then now. Where we first made the compact and bond of friendship it shall be dissolved, for ever and ever more, as I say. Sometimes one finds something better,

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WHEN the sun is pouring down its rays upon the ocean at noonday, none of them penetrate to a depth of over two hundred feet. Could a diver descend to that depth, he would find himself shrouded in darkness as profound as though he were immersed in a sea of ink.

A WATCH has been constructed which measures less than one-quarter of an inch in diameter, or one with a face of about the size of the head of a large-sized tack or nail. The case is made of the very finest of gold, and the whole watch weighs less than two grains troy. In troy weight it takes 480 grains to make an ounce, and twelve ounces constitute a pound, or 5,760 grains are contained in a pound. This wonderful piece of mechanism weighs only one 2,880th part of a pound. So great a curiosity was this midget considered that its owner paid £500 for it, and would not sell it for twice that amount. The numerals on the face are in Arabic, and if the hands were put end to end they would not measure five twenty-fourths of an inch in length, the large one being less than one-eighth and the small one less than one-twelfth of an inch long. It has, besides, just as an ordinary watch or clock, a second indicator, which is about as large in diameter as the small hand is long, and the hand of this second indicator is less than one-sixteenth of an inch in length. The numerals here are also in Arabic, but are engraved in red to be more easily discernible. The works and hands are made of the finest tempered steel and are set throughout in diamond chips. It is constructed on the most improved plan, being wound by the stem and set by pulling the stem out a short distance.

sweeter even, than friendship in this world. At eight by the river we will say good-bye to our bond. You will come?"

"Yes!" answered the girl, tremulously. Mingled with the bitter came a sense of bliss to her heart as she said it. "Yes!" she murmured, again, softly, "I will come."

"So be it," Alan responded quietly, and loosed her hand. He said nothing more, but she knew he was content with her answer.

Oliver looked after him as he passed through the wooden orchard gate, under the apple trees, and then faded out of sight in the distance. To her he seemed the goodliest, most gladome sight her eyes desired, or could rest upon—the very light, indeed, of her life.

She turned to finish gathering the golden Reine Claude, with a little sobbing sigh to herself. It meant a host of conflicting emotions wrapped in one little breath.

For herself, she knew that Alan was right when he said "Friendship was dead." So it was dead and buried, existing no longer; but Love reigned in its stead.

"I love him!" she said, tenderly, lifting her great brown eyes to the blue heavens above; and a lament on a tree near broke forth into thrilling song, as if in answer to that whisper so tender and so sweet.

(To be continued.)

FACETIE.

PEOPLE who use too much perfumery show that they haven't enough sense of their own.

If you don't let everybody know that you are somebody, nobody will think you are anybody.

LITTLE GIRL (to visitor): "Don't you think I look just like mamma?" Her mother: "Hush, dear, don't be vain."

DOROTHY: "They say his wife used to be a paragon." Aunt Jane: "Why, she didn't, neither! I knew her folks. She was a Perkins."

McSWATTERS: "Where are you going?" McSWATTERS: "I'm going South for my health." McSWATTERS: "How did your health ever get so far away as that?"

"My dear," said Growells, "you are simply talking nonsense." "I know it," replied his better half, "but it's because I want you to understand what I say."

"I HATE him!" she exclaimed. "I would do anything I could to make him miserable." "Then, why don't you marry him?" asked her dearest friend, sweetly.

GUN: "Jones grumbles at cold weather!" MAN: "Yes." "And he grumbles at hot weather!" "Yes." "What does he like?" "He likes to grumble."

TOMMY: "Snaggaby was afraid he was growing weary of the club, and he took herole treatment to bring back his liking for it." Walter: "What did he do?" Tommy: "Got married!"

MILES: "I wonder how a composer feels when he encounters a man with a hand-organ grinding his tunes." Giles: "Probably like any other man who has to meet his own notes."

DAUGHTER: "Shall we invite Dr. Biggles to the reception?" Mother: "I think we'd better not, he's so absent-minded. He might charge it in the bill."

"WHAT is arbitration, pa?" "Well it is a good thing for you, Tommy. When your mother wants to whip you, I coax her off, and when I want to whip you she coaxes me off."

SHE threatened all sorts of things, and finally he got desperate and exclaimed: "Do your worst!" "And what did she do?" "Very coolly she began to play the piano." "I see, took him at his word."

FIRST GUEST: "Won't you join me in requesting Miss Squaller to recite!" Second Guest: "But I don't like recitations." First Guest: "Neither do I. But if she doesn't recite she'll sing."

"Do you work for the poor?" asked the philanthropist. "Oh, yes, indeed; indefatigably," replied the Society band, with enthusiasm. "Why I make it a point to go to every charity ball that is given."

"We must be circumspect," said the young husband, "and not show each other too much attention in public." "Why?" asked the wife. "If we do folks will think our home-life one perpetual cat-and-dog fight."

"MARY!" yelled the post. "What is it dear?" asked the patient wife. "Why don't you keep that kid quiet? What on earth's the matter with it?" "I don't know, dear; I'm singing one of your lullabies to the poor little darling."

MARIE: "You men don't seem to realise that a girl can't imagine anything worse than to have a young man kiss her against her will." Jack: "No! I should think it would be worse to have us refuse to kiss you when you're willing."

MAN IN THE CHAIR: "Look here, you are flaying me alive. This is more than mortal can put up with. Where is the proprietor of the shop?" Barber: "I think he has gone out. He usually goes out to get shaved about this time."

"WHAT do you think of this controversy as to whether marriage is a failure?" he asked for want of something else to say. "I don't know anything about it," she replied, "but," she added, hastily, "I always was fond of experiments."

"WHY do you insist on your son's becoming a lawyer?" asked a friend. "I've made a will leaving him all my money," was the answer. "It seems to me that if he is a lawyer himself he will stand a better chance of getting some of it."

"DON'T you think you're making a rather broad statement when you say every pessimist is necessarily a married man?" "But I didn't say that." "Oh, didn't you? I thought you did." "No; I said every married man is necessarily a pessimist."

FIRST WATCHDOG: "Do you bark in your sleep?" Second Watchdog: "No!" First Watchdog: "Too bad! Now, I do, and the family think I'm awake all night."

MR. MEKKER, who had gone to the front door to answer the postman's knock, put his head inside the door of the room where his wife was sitting. "It's a letter for me, my dear," he said. "Shall I open it?"

"Oh, you darling, I'm so glad to hear of your happiness! What did Mr. Dickson say when he proposed?" "He said he loved me from the very first." "I should never have suspected that; he is such a young-looking man!"

WOMAN'S ART AGAIN.—Unwelcome Sailor: "That's a lovely song! It always carries me away." She: "If I had known how much pleasure it could give us both I would have sung it earlier in the evening."

AFTER passing three years in Paris, a French student wrote to his father as follows:—"I have made up my mind to set to work, dear father; therefore I should like to know whether it was law or medicine that I came to Paris to study."

STRANGER: "I noticed your advertisement in the paper this morning for a man to retail imported canaries." Proprietor of Bird Store: "Yes, sir. Are you looking for a job?" Stranger: "Oh, no; I merely had a curiosity to know how the canaries lost their tails."

MAUD: "What do you do when a man persists in asking for a dance and you don't care to dance with him?" Marie: "Tell him my card is full." Maud: "But supposing it isn't, and he still persists?" Marie: "Then I insist that it is, and let him see that it isn't."

MR. DUFFY: "Mrs. Kelly, it pains me to inform you that your husband has just bin blowed oop bod a doinamotte carthridge. We found his head in wan lot, an' his body in another lot, an' his legs in another lot, an' his arms an' fate in another lot." Mrs. Kelly (proudly): "Begorra! tho'ts Molke all over."

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SOCIETY.

THE Queen will go to Osborne about Tuesday, July 17th, intending to stay there until the end of August.

It is understood that Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, and the Duke will take up their residence at Inverary Castle in September next.

PRINCE LOUIS NAPOLEON has been promoted by the Tsar to the rank of Major-General, but he is to continue his command of the Regiment of Imperial Guards.

THE Crown Prince William of Germany is to visit Rome next month. It has been practically decided that his Royal Highness is to accompany the Emperor on his visit to Cowes in August next.

THE King of Denmark is not likely to reach Paris until the middle of July, and it will be quite the end of that month before he arrives in London, if he carries out his intention of paying a brief visit to England on his way back to Denmark.

THE Empress Frederick will, it is expected, visit England when the Queen returns from Balmoral. The Duke and Duchess of Coburg would have visited the Queen at Whitehall but for the Duke having been ordered to Hungary.

It is thought that the Shah of Persia will arrive in London during the last week in July, which will be just the expiring week of the season. The Khedive is anxious to visit London this year, and if he does so he will be received with great honour.

DURING the summer the German Crown Prince is to pay visits to various Courts. His Imperial Highness will stay a week with his grandmother, the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, and also with the Emperor of Austria, and will spend a few days at Rome with the King and Queen of Italy. It is not generally known that the Crown Prince is now the official representative of his father, and should the German Emperor fall ill, or be away from home, his eldest son would be the legal Regent of the country. His Imperial Highness is the first Crown Prince of Prussia who has celebrated his coming-of-age as German Crown Prince of the Empire.

It is understood that the Duke and Duchess of York will be the guests of Lord and Lady Dartmouth at Patsall Park for a couple of days in July, when they are to pay a visit to Wolverhampton for the purpose of opening a new wing of the Royal Orphan Asylum, and they will also lay the foundation-stone of the Wolverhampton New Free Library. Patsall, which lies on the borders of Staffordshire and Shropshire, is famous for its beautiful gardens and its picturesque deer-park, which contains a large lake. The house, which was originally built by Vanbrugh for the Astleys, was much enlarged by the late Lord Dartmouth, and now consists of a centre and wings of red stone. It is remarkably well placed on a raised mound in the most elevated part of the park, and there are very extensive views from the terrace.

It is stated at the Court of the Hague that the Queen Dowager Emma of the Netherlands has had her way with her somewhat *difficile* young daughter, Queen Wilhelmina, and induced the latter to express her willingness to become betrothed to a certain German Prince whom the Kaiser has long had in view as possible husband for the youthful Queen, and to gain which and his Imperial Majesty has long worked. Now, however, both the Kaiser and the Queen Dowager appear to have gained their object, for it is rumoured that the betrothal, the knowledge of which it at present confined to the palace, will shortly be made public, in all probability after their Majesties return from Oberhof, Thuringia, to which place they are going for a short stay, after being present at the wedding of the Queen Dowager's sister, Princess Elisabeth of Waldeck-Pyrmont, with the Hereditary Count Alexander of Erbach-Schönburg at Arolsen.

STATISTICS.

HALF a million clerks are employed in London.

THE coal production of the world amounted to 660,000,000 tons for the year 1898.

IN proportion to its size, a fly walks thirteen times as fast as a man can run.

THE total consumption of paper in the British Isles is 1,047,000 tons a year.

THE population of British South Africa is not more than 4,000,000, an average of only four persons per square mile.

GEMS.

FOUR things come not back—the spoken word, the sped arrow, the past life, the neglected opportunity.

THERE is a kind of knowledge from which many persons shrink. It is that which involves certain duties and responsibilities that they are not willing to accept.

THE special dangers which beset our neighbours seem so much more terrible than those which beset ourselves. The latter are but pardonable weaknesses, we think, but the former are mortal sins.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CORNFLOUR MILK PUDDING.—Ingredients: One pint of milk, two tablespoonsfuls of cornflour, two eggs, the thinly pared rind of a lemon, sugar to taste. Put the milk and thinly pared rind of the lemon into a saucepan; let it simmer very gently till the milk is well flavoured. Take out the rind and bring the milk to a boil. Mix the cornflour thinly and evenly with a little milk. Stir this well into the boiling milk, and boil for five minutes. Well beat the eggs. Let the cornflour go just off the boil, strain in the eggs, mix well, sweeten to taste, and pour into a dish and serve.

SHEEP'S HEAD BROTH.—Get a singed sheep's head and four feet from the butcher and get it sawn open; take the brains out and rub all the blackened part over and the feet; rub hard as if you were rubbing up a candlestick; it does no harm to the hands, but the reverse; leave it like that all night if you like, just dry on a plate, then put it into a pot with cold water; put it on the fire till it gets hot, take it out and scrape it clean (it scrapes quite easily), wash it in hot and cold water to take away all the black that remains; tie it up with a string into its original shape, and it is ready for the broth. Do the same to the feet, only split them up an inch between the toes and take out a little bit of skin you find there. To make the broth—one small cabbage or savoy, two leeks, a small turnip, a carrot, some parsley, three quarts of water, pepper and salt, quarter-pound barley, two ounces of dried peas. Put the head and feet, the barley and peas, into the clean broth pot, and add twelve breakfast cups of water (three quarts). Let it boil for one hour, then have the cabbage chopped up, the carrot and turnip cut up in very small neat pieces, the leeks (particularly the white part) cut up very finely. Put all these vegetables into a bowl and pour boiling water over them, cover with a plate and let them stand for a quarter of an hour; then drain and put into the pot with one teaspoonful of salt. Let it boil now for one and a-half hours, and when you have the parsley nicely dried and finely chopped put it in and boil five minutes. Take out the head, take off the string, and lay it out flat on a dish; take the tongue out and skin it and split it, and place it on the top of the head. Season the soup and it is ready. The broth should be skimmed before the vegetables are put in.

MISCELLANEOUS.

NATIONAL schools in New Zealand are free.

THERE will be two State concerts at Buckingham Palace, one during the last week of this month, and another about the middle of July.

THE Afghans never leave their homes without having an arsenal of weapons in their belts. Arms are their adornments.

PATTA, in Peru, is the driest spot on the face of the earth; the average interval between two showers of rain is seven years.

IN Berlin, the pawnshop is a Royal and philanthropic institution. Any profit that is made is spent on charity.

A HAIRDRESSER says that an old silk handkerchief is much better to use in stroking the hair night and morning than a brush.

THE word *husar* is from the Magyar word *hontar*, meaning the 20th. *Husars*, as cavalry soldiers, were first confined to Hungary.

THE largest flower in the world comes from Sumatra. Its size is fully 8 ft. in diameter—about the size of a carriage-wheel.

THE cabbage still grows wild in Greece, where it originated. *Basilisks* are native to China, but have been grown in Europe for centuries.

THE largest plant in the world is a gigantic seaweed known as the "nereocystis," which frequently grows to a height of more than three hundred feet.

THE Island of Ferro is one of the largest in the Canary group, and it has received its name on account of its iron-bound soil, through which no river or stream flows.

PHOTOCINIC birds are made in Nagasaki, Japan. When a light is applied to their wings they sail through the air, fluttering their wings and performing other bird-like antics.

THE sugar-crop of the world amounts in a normal year to about 8,000,000 tons, of which the larger part, about 4,500,000 tons, comes from beets; and the remainder, 3,500,000 tons, from sugar-cane.

THE only place in the world where violin-making may be said to constitute the staple industry is Markneukirchen, in Saxony. There are altogether about 15,000 people in the district engaged exclusively in the manufacture of violins.

It is curious to note the survival in Scottish legal and agricultural parlance of the closely allied term "Bower" (pronounced Boer). The expression is properly applied to a person who hires, from the proprietor or principal tenant of a farm, a stock of cows along with the right of grazing them on certain fields. The Bower makes in return a money payment of so much per cow, and trusts to making his profit out of the sale of the dairy produce. The precise legal position of a party who has a "bowing" lease is somewhat intermediate, being midway between that of a mere manager and that of a sub-tenant. Instances of this mixed contract of lease of land and hiring of labour are now rare, but it is still to be found in agricultural districts. The word "bower" is allied to the Gaelic "bo," a cow, and among its numerous cognates in the Aryan languages is included the Dutch term "Boer."

THE native labourers on the Boer farms—often thirty or forty miles from the nearest village—have hard times compared to their brethren who work in the dorp (town); they are badly fed, badly housed, and too often treated as if they were cattle. One often wonders why an ill-used family of Kaffirs does not pack up its few cooking pots and leave a cruel master; but the real reason of the Kaffirs' submission is that they are always induced to make agreement to serve for a certain time—perhaps a year or two years—and if they go away within that period they can be brought back, beaten, and put in the trunk (as the jail is called). The only food given Kaffirs on the farms is mealies (corn), of which they make a very coarse flour and then boil into a thick porridge; and perhaps once a week they get a piece of mutton as a treat for specially hard work.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LENA.—Wash it; good plash stands that.

R. V.—They should be chained by the nearest kin.

HAROLD.—Southampton is both a borough and a county.

ANASTAS.—Give them a coat of luminous paint; get it at colourman's.

E. S.—Omdurman, 2nd September, 1898; Dargai, 20th October, 1897.

RAM.—Sprinkle a little salt over the feather before attempting to curl it.

FENDI.—Try washing the discolorations with tepid soap and ammonia.

HILDA.—A lady would scarcely take a gentleman's arm unless he offered it.

G. D.—Good meerschaum will float, without mouth-pieces and silver mountings.

R. P.—The white of an egg beaten up will be found to make a good leather varnish.

INQUIRER.—We fear you have no remedy under the circumstances, but consult a solicitor.

W. R.—None except duly licensed chemist is at liberty to sell carbolic acid in any form.

ANXIOUS MOTHER.—There is no institution where children could be boarded as suggested.

GENT.—A few drops of ammonia in water will clean hair brushes and combs almost instantly.

C. P.—Write to Inland Revenue, Somerset House, and to Stationers' Hall as to the copyright.

WORKED.—If children's clothes were dipped in alum water and then dried they would not take fire.

INCARCER.—Cronje surrendered on February 27th, and Lady Smith was relieved on February 28th.

HOUSEWIFE.—Prick them with a pin, and if they are good the oil will instantly spread round the puncture.

FRIZZIE.—The eldest sister is the Miss. Other sister and unmarried daughters must add Christian names.

BARBARA.—All a matter of taste. Eyes of all colours, even those that in a certain light look green, have their admirers.

J. K.—The highest waves that have been measured have not exceeded thirty feet, and their length was about the same.

MAT.—A little borax put in water in which scarlet naphins and red bordered towels are to be washed will prevent them from fading.

VERY ANXIOUS.—Impossible to say where (man may be; a demon corps he could enter; there is nothing for it but to wait for next letter.

R. R.—You may be prosecuted for trespassing in pursuit of game, but not for ordinary trespass. You may be sued for damages in a civil court.

L. M. R.—Of course, the Duke of York will succeed to the Throne of England, if he lives. He will become the Prince of Wales on the accession of his father.

MAINE.—Stains caused by grease can generally be removed from light cloth dresses by means of chloroform. This should be rubbed on the stains with a piece of flannel.

VIOLA.—Wet a piece of rag with a little benzine and lightly touch the spots with it; then wipe with a clean rag or piece of flannel. Hold the back of the velvet over boiling water to raise the pile again.

GRACE.—Coffee stains on woollen articles may be removed by the use of glycerine. Rub it over the stain, and then wash the place with lukewarm water, and iron the material on the wrong side until it is dry.

FORWARDED.—Strew liberally powdered borax about their haunts, and persevere in the treatment. At the same time you can catch numbers in traps set for the purpose, as the borax takes some time to drive them away.

N. R.—Beelzebub was the god of the Philistines, who had a temple at Ekron, and who was worshipped as the god of flies, which is the literal meaning of the word. In the Scriptures, Beelzebub is also the name given to Satan.

BUSTY LEE.—When washing glasses which have been used for milk, they should always be first rinsed in cold water and then washed in hot. This will make it much easier to bring the glasses to the desired point of brightness.

SALLIE.—These pigs boiled a few moments and quickly dried, once or twice a month, become more flexible and durable. Clothes lines will last longer, and keep in better order for washing-day service, if occasionally treated in the same way.

CONSUMPTIVE READER.—When cleaning leather boots add a few drops of paraffin to the blacking. This serves a twofold purpose; it makes a better polish, it preserves the leather from cracking, and also adds considerably to the wearing properties of the leather.

HANNAH.—Articles made in paper mache should never be washed with soap or very hot water, for this will cause them to crack. Sponge them over with warm water, and while still damp sprinkle flour over them and polish with a soft cloth or flannel.

G. J.—Assuming the deceased left no wife or children, his property would be equally divided between his surviving brothers and sisters; and in the case of the death of either of the brothers and sisters their children would divide between them their parents' share.

RAM.—Feathers may be cleaned by being dipped in some strong warm lather and squeezed carefully dry until all the dirt is removed; rinse in tepid water; dried grasses can also be cleaned in the same way; shake feathers before fire when drying.

N. R.—Herculaneum is an ancient and now buried city of Italy, near the Bay of Naples. The date of its foundation is unknown, and little more is known about it except its destruction, with Pompeii, by the great eruption of Mount Vesuvius, A.D. 79.

EVA.—When colour on a fabric has been accidentally or otherwise destroyed by acid, ammonia is applied to neutralise the same, after which an application of chloroform will in almost all cases restore the original colour. The application of ammonia is common, but that of chloroform is but little known.

CONQUER.—"Vendetta" is an Italian word meaning vengeance. It was formerly the general practice in Corsica, and still prevails in some of the remote parts of the island, for individuals to take private vengeance upon those who have shed the blood of their relatives; hence the popular term "vendetta."

AT TWILIGHT.

When the windows of the heavens are shut in by purple clouds,

And the silent stars are glancing through their folds in graceful crowds,

There are precious thoughts that deepen into strange, delicious pain,

And a flood of tender feeling comes across the heart like rain.

There's a subtle fascination in the twilight hour to me,

For 'tis then I dream of friendship, it is then I think

And my wishes for the future starry waves around me cast,

Sparkling brightly on the present, shining faintly on the past.

Tangled paths once crossed each other, and for one brief day on earth,

We two met and walked together, knowing love's sincerest worth;

When we count our brightest moments, reckoning their deepest power,

We shall find them all recorded in the sacred twilight hour.

I shall never cease to cherish recollections of the time

When our lives were knit together with a sympathy divine;

For I've builded thee a tablet in the chapel of my heart

That shall never be neglected, nor decay and fall apart.

And I ask thee, now we're parted, still to give my name a place

In the circle where affection glows upon each friendly face;

Sometimes think of me at twilight, when the air is filled with balm,

And the summer eve is breathless with a sweet and holy calm.

Think of me as of a dreamer, one whose life is like a star,

Flashing up with fitful brightness through the clouds that lower afar,

Struggling like some captive songster to unbar the door that stands

Fast between life's narrow valley, and its broader "upper lands."

MRS.—To clean and restore the elasticity of cane-bottomed chairs, turn the chair, and with hot water and a sponge, saturate the cane-work thoroughly. If the chair is dirty, use soap. Afterward set the chair to dry out of doors, and the seat will be taut as when new.

MICHAEL.—Put into a stewpan a quart of peas, a lettuce and an onion, both sliced, a bit of butter, some pepper and salt, and no more water than hangs round the lettuce from washing. Stew very gently for two hours.

When to be served beat up an egg and stir into them; or a bit of flour and butter.

J. L.—If you are so sure of your lover's affection and of your own unchangeable feelings to him, there is surely no need to hasten on the marriage. We should say two years is by no means too long to wait; it will then be quite soon enough to undertake the arduous duties of matrimonial life.

PARTY POLL.—Have clean lukewarm water and good white soap, and do not let them lie in the water. Rinse, and hang up to dry before a fire as quickly as possible, and never from them. Always wash black stockings separate from white or pale-coloured ones, and never use a pair too long without changing.

R. F.—It might be done by subjecting them to benzine baths, which probably is the "best" way, but would require more lengthened instructions than we have space for. You might try sponging with benzine diluted with water, or if not much soiled, breadcrumbs and starch might be sufficient.

FLORA.—Fresh fruit stains may be removed by soaking the garment in boiling water before washing it. Ink stains usually succumb to soaking in fresh milk. The milk will not injure the most delicate colours.

FLOWER.—Make the article to be cleaned grass free by means of soap and hot water, then rub on whitening paste with the hand until it has all practically disappeared, by which time the silver should be dry, when it may be polished with the washleather, and finished up with a brush where necessary. But this last instrument should never be used on highly polished parts.

Another thing, be sure your brush has soft hairs.

REGULAR READER.—If the colour will bear washing, first cleanse the place out with pure water, followed, if necessary, with soap, but in London mud has other ingredients than the above will remove, and these must next be treated with a little cream of tartar, which, when it has done its work, must be well washed out with water. This is the best method we can give, but it is not easily carried out by unaccustomed hands.

MATTY.—Mix two parts of powdered whitening with one of powdered blue and half a pound of soft soap, and allow it to come to a boil; while still hot apply with a soft cloth to the stained marble, and allow it to remain there until quite dry; then wash off with hot water and soap in which a little salis of lemon has been dissolved. Dry well with a piece of soft flannel, and your marble will be clean and white as when new.

DORRIS.—Cover a quart bottle with linen, stretched smoothly to fit the shape, begin at the bottom, and wind the lace round it, basing it flat at both edges to the linen. Soap it well with fine soap, rinse by plunging it up and down in a pail of clean water, put it into a pot, and boil till white; then set it in the sun to dry, clip the basing thread, and unwind the lace. If it has been carefully basing on it needs no ironing, and looks like new.

FOOLISH BETTY.—The old rhyme for brides ran this way:—

Married in white, you have chosen all right;

Married in grey, you will go far away;

Married in black, you will wish yourself back;

Married in red, you will wish yourself dead;

Married in green, ashamed to be seen;

Married in blue, he will always be true;

Married in pearl, you will live in a whirl;

Married in yellow, ashamed of your fellow;

Married in brown, you will live out of town;

Married in pink, your spirit will sink.

FLAINE.—Dip the mackintosh coat in cold soft water; then, with a soft scrubbing-brush and yellow soap, proceed to scrub it all over, having spread it out flat on a table. When the dirt is removed, dip the coat in repeated waters to get rid of the suds, but do not wring it. Hang it up in the air to drain and dry.

Paint or grease spots must be removed by spirits of turpentine, but common soap will perform the rest. The process will not injure the collar or lining. The only thing to be avoided is the use of hot water, or the fire in drying, for either would cause the caoutchouc to melt.

PORRY.—Bilk, after the tender ministrations of the dyer, often returns to its owner in a sadly limp and listless condition. It can readily be restored to the same condition as that in which it left the manufacturer's hands if a dozen large potatoes be grated in a gallon of soft water, stirred well, and left to settle for twenty-four hours. The fabric must then be sponged with the clear liquid, which must be absolutely free from any sediment. Then place the material between moist cloths of fine texture, and hot-iron with considerable pressure in one direction. Your silk should then once more be silky.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—The flag of the Transvaal is a very simple affair. It consists of one broad vertical bar of green next the flagpole, and three horizontal bars, respectively red, white and blue, the red being at the top. Take, for instance, the simple red, white and blue flag of Holland and sew a vertical bar of green on the flagstaff end of it. That is all. The Boers speak of their flag as the "vleisier," the four colour, just as the French call their flag the "tricolore."

The Orange Free State flag is a simple rectangle of vivid orange. The motto of the South African Republic, the formal name of the Transvaal, is "Een Dracht Maak Magt," which means "Right makes Might." It is on the truth of this adage that they pin their faith in the present struggle.

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